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ABSTRACT

Noting that students read and write nonfiction without noticing how the language of nonfiction shapes the subject they are studying, the articles in this journal demonstrate ways in which teachers can link their concern for language with their students' interest in content subjects. Titles of the 24 essays are as follows: (1) "Spreading the Word about Nonfiction: Notes from a School Librarian"; (2) "Library Resources for Nonfiction"; (3) "Some Readers Prefer Nonfiction"; (4) "A Primary Source Method of Teaching Biography"; (5) "From Biographical Research to Presentation to Writing"; (6) "In Search of Self and Others: Reading and Writing Autobiography"; (7) "Consider Autobiography"; (8) "How They Write: A Study of Writers' Self-Reports"; (9) Hot-Spots: The Journal as Nonfiction"; (10) "How Do You Spell 'Nonfiction'?"; (11) "Making Connections: Fiction and Nonfiction"; (12) "The Unexamined Life"; (13) "A Nonfiction Unit That Costs Less Than It Comes To"; (14) Generating Nonfiction: Writing Across the Curriculum"; (15) "American Studies: What Is It?"; (16) "Fiction and Nonfiction in U.S. History"; (17) "Using a Historic Site in a Writing Class"; (18) "Creating Readers Who Look for Something"; (19) "An Essay for Life" Joan Didion's 'On Self-Respect'"; (20) "Can 'The Meaning of Life' Have Meaning in High School?"; (21) "Bettelheim's 'Uses of Enchantment' as Part of a Storytelling Unit"; (22) "Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall': Nonfiction History as a Literary Classic"; (23) "Fiction, Nonfiction: Some New Elements with a Dash of History"; and (24) "Clue Me In: Mystery Stories with Exotic Backgrounds." (HTH)

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CONNECTICUT ENGLISH JOURNAL

A Publication of the Connecticut Council of Teachers of English

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NONFICTION

CS 209 539

VOLUME 16 NUMBER 1

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FALL 1984

Call for Manuscripts

You are invited to submit an article, an idea, a review of materials, or a program description on any aspect of the topics described below. Whatever you write, remember that most of our readers are teachers of secondary English and include as much specific, practical, useful detail as possible--in only a paragraph or in no more than eight double-spaced pages.

Spring 1985 issue: **GRAMMAR, USAGE, AND SENTENCES** (Deadline 3/15/85)

Despite a large body of research which shows that teaching traditional schoolbook grammar does not help people to write better, most schools still teach it. Do you think it's a good idea, nonetheless? If so, why? What are some techniques for teaching it? Tell us about some interesting ways to teach specific aspects of grammar. How do you decide what usage to teach? Have you used any especially successful exercises or activities to teach usage? To get students to write better sentences? What are they? Have you substituted something else for traditional grammar? What? How does the substitute work? What arguments are there for or against teaching grammar?

Fall 1985 issue: **STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS** (Deadline 8/1/85)

The research paper, using library resources, has been traditional in English classrooms. Tell about any methods or types of units which get students interested in and excited about the traditional research paper. But, in addition to the traditional set-topic paper, sometimes students really research something. Such projects can be large and long or small and brief, but they usually require that students use primary sources, collect original data, discover things previously unknown. Have you ideas about such projects? Have your students collected dialect information for your area? Worked with the science classes to study the geology of your town? Interviewed local notables? Found information about the proposed sewage processing plant? Have you combined written reports of the research with oral reports?

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Every issue of CEJ has a theme or topic. Please submit material keyed to the theme of a particular issue. On that theme we accept short poems, humorous comments, clippings (so long as copyright permissions aren't involved, so long as you write the "frame" for the item, and so long as the clipping isn't so long) and tidbits--in addition to the helpful teaching articles which comprise the bulk of each issue. All articles should be practical and useful to the classroom teacher. Most of our readers are secondary teachers, but we print articles for elementary language arts teachers, articles which relate other disciplines to English language arts teaching, and college teaching articles provided that the college articles also benefit secondary or elementary teachers. We do not print literary criticism.

For all manuscripts

1. Type, on 8 1/2" x 11" heavyweight (not onionskin) paper, leaving 1" margins.
2. Write your last name on each page.
3. Number the pages.
4. Do not use footnotes. Incorporate footnotes into the text or enclose a list of sources to be printed at the end of your article.
5. Include your complete home and school addresses and phone numbers.
6. Charts or line illustrations should be camera-ready and of proper (usually small) size.
7. Suggest a short title for your article.
8. Enclose 25 words of biographical information, written exactly as you would like it to appear. Be sure to tell where you teach.
9. Enclose a self-addressed envelope and sufficient postage so that your manuscript can be returned to you, if necessary.

Send manuscripts to Diane P. Shugert, CEJ Editor, Box 124, Middle Haddam, CT 06456.

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The Journal of the Connecticut Council of Teachers of English

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NONFICTION

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Materials for publication and all communications regarding the journal should be sent to the editor: Diane P. Shugert, Box 124, Middle Haddam, CT 06456. CEJ solicits manuscripts related to themes announced in the Call for Manuscripts elsewhere in this issue.

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PREFACE

Like Moliere's character who realized, "Good Heavens! For more than forty years I have been speaking prose without knowing it," many of our students have been reading and writing nonfiction without knowing that what they are doing counts as language use and without noticing how the language of nonfiction shapes the subject they are studying. As we struggle to interest them in fiction so that reading may become integral to their lives, they, too, struggle to understand and cope with their world, to feel confident that they can draw on society's resources when they need them, and to learn what is real and what is true. The articles in this issue of CEJ demonstrate ways in which teachers can link their concern for language with their students' interest in subject. As students read, write, and analyze nonfiction, they increase the knowledge of their own lives and expand their means for dealing with that knowledge.

With this issue Nancy Rabianski-Carriuolo ends her term as Book Review Editor. Her duties at the University of New Haven require that she move on to other things. The high quality of the reviews under her editorship testifies to her skill and dedication. We will miss her, and we thank her for her contribution to the profession.

Thanks also to Doris Hagearty of the Secretarial Service of Newington and to Dave Farnsworth of Curry Copy Center in Newington for their meticulous work in typing and printing.

Diane Shugert

On Telling the Truth

He asked Rostov to tell them where and how he had received his wound. This pleased Rostov and he began telling them about it, growing more and more impassioned as he talked. He described the action exactly as men who have taken part in battles generally do describe them, that is as they would like them to have been, as they have heard them described by others, and making them sound more glorious, and quite unlike what they actually were. Rostov was a truthful young man and would on no account have told a deliberate lie. He began with the intention of relating everything exactly as it happened, but imperceptibly, unconsciously, and inevitably, he slipped into falsehood. If he had told the truth to his listeners, who, like himself, had heard numerous stories of cavalry attacks, had formed a definite idea of what an attack was, and were expecting to hear just such a story, either they would not have believed him, or, still worse, they would have thought that Rostov himself was at fault, since what generally happened to those taking part in a cavalry charge had not happened to him. He could not tell them simply that everyone had set out at a trot, that he had fallen from his horse, sprained his arm, and then had run from a Frenchman into the woods as fast as his legs would carry him. Besides, to describe everything as it was, telling only what had really happened, would have required great self-control. To tell the truth is very difficult, and young people are rarely capable of it. His listeners expected to hear how, fired with excitement and beside himself, he had swept down on the enemy's square like a tempest, cut his way in, slashing right and left and how his saber had tasted blood and he had fallen exhausted, and so on. And these are the things he told them.

Tolstoy, War and Peace, Book I, Part III,
Chapter 7

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The following people contributed quotations on the themes of "What is true?" and "What is real?"

Norman Asbridge (Larkin),
Roy Ogren (Lucas & Stevens),
Diane Shugert (Tolstoy & Trollope),
Eileen Sweeney (Twain & Dickinson).

Spreading the Word about Nonfiction: Notes from a School Librarian

Gretchen V. Swibold

Very few of us know enough about nonfiction for young people. We tend to learn about fiction books because they almost always win Newbery and other book awards; fiction books are the ones we read aloud to our students and our own children; they are the ones that often cause controversy, so we read them to make sure we can defend them if need be; many well known fiction books are written by famous authors so we feel that we should be familiar with their books at least; fiction books are what we hear about most at college in our children's and young adult literature courses; if we teach science and social studies we tend to limit ourselves to textbooks, thereby ignoring the nonfiction trade books which could do so much to enliven our often superficial textbooks.

In self defense, then, it's fair to say that most of us have not been educated to believe that nonfiction is important literature or that it like fiction can be excellent and compelling--something more than just information.

Recently in our elementary schools we set out to bring nonfiction and its pleasures to the attention of everyone--students, teachers, and parents. For three weeks two reading consultants and I sponsored a reading project called "Reading in the Real World." To win a certificate or, better yet, a nonfiction paperback prize, students had to read a nonfiction book in each of 5 to 20 subjects, all related to our school curriculum; the solar system, famous people, archeology and culture, conservation and pollution, the future, foreign countries, plant life, animal life, manufacturing, government, family heritage, crafts, health and food, transportation, energy, careers, history, physical science, geography, and geology. We chose broad subjects so that everyone would be able to find suitable books in local school and public libraries. We encouraged parents to read to and with their children and even invited them to a buffet supper followed by a discussion of the best in nonfiction for young people. We stipulated only that each parent must read one children's nonfiction book before coming.

At the beginning of the project we sent home with each student a list of suggested books for each of the 20 subject areas so as to provide families with names of books and authors which we thought significant. We talked about our program with our

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Gretchen V. Swibold is library media specialist for three Canton, Ct, elementary schools.

local public librarians and gave them our book lists too, knowing that they were as much a part of the program and its success as we were. Response to our project was overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Children chose books they might never otherwise have read; parents and teachers were amazed at the diversity and quality of books available. The public library was overrun with children and parents looking for nonfiction. While a program like ours was organized for elementary participation, I believe it could be adapted for older students and/or limited to students taking particular courses, particularly those in English, history, and social studies.

While it is certainly the responsibility of all teachers to read children's and young adult books, it is the responsibility of librarians in particular to inform teachers of books that are available in their respective fields. Both elementary and secondary teachers have a right to expect their libraries to educate them regarding important authors, new publications, good books that are being overlooked. If you are not very knowledgeable about nonfiction, ask your librarian for a list of excellent nonfiction books in the subject of your choice--biography, current events and issues, third world cultures and countries, what have you. When you read a rave review of a nonfiction book that interests you, ask whether your school library plans to buy it. Librarians respond to interest on the part of teachers (in fact, they crave it). Borrow nonfiction library books that you think are noteworthy and display them in your classroom, or if that's not possible because you are peripatetic, ask the librarian to display them in the library for you or to give a talk on them to your class.

When I read Milton Meltzer's books HUNTED LIKE A WOLF: THE STORY OF THE SEMINOLE WAR and NEVER TO FORGET: THE JEWS OF THE HOLOCAUST, I couldn't keep my enthusiasm to myself. I wrote reviews of those books (and 13 others) and related them very specifically to our 5th and 6th grade social studies textbooks, to chapters and pages where they fit in. Among those reviews I pointed out nonfiction books which were much more outspoken than our textbooks, and areas of controversy in which the nonfiction book reflected a point of view different from that of the text. I had those reviews duplicated and distributed to all our middle school classroom teachers.

For English and history teachers biographies are of special interest, but there are lots of poor biographies on most library shelves. Instead of encouraging your students to read just any biography, ask your librarian to select the finest ones in the library and then have your students select from amongst them. Or suggest that they select one fine biography and one less distinguished and find out for themselves what makes a character really come alive.

If you don't consider yourself knowledgeable enough about excellent nonfiction, I recommend reading BEYOND FACT: NONFICTION

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, published by the American Library Association in 1982. Authors, editors, and critics write about what we have a right to expect from excellent nonfiction--biography, history, science, books on controversial subjects. Citations from their articles make up a superlative reading list. The book's Appendix A "Awards for Nonfiction: Where All the Prizes Go," includes names every nonfiction reader will be familiar with: Jean Fritz, Shirley Clubok, David Macaulay, Milton Meltzer, David Kherdian, Eloise Greenfield, Michael Fox, Robert Liston, Millicent Selsam, Robert McClung, Laurence Pringle, and many others.

Also useful as a guide to the best in nonfiction for young people is CHILDREN'S BOOKS: AWARDS AND PRIZES, published biennially by the Children's Book Council in New York City. Its listings, which include British Commonwealth and American fiction and nonfiction books, show us graphically how relatively rare it is for nonfiction excellence to be rewarded.

At the end of BEYOND FACT there is a list of books and journals about nonfiction for young people. Its depth and diversity are indicative of broad professional interest in nonfiction. Thus it seems we have authors who write fine nonfiction and we have critics who tell us about the authors and their books. Now it is time for those of us in libraries and classrooms to pass the word along to our colleagues and our students. It's our job to increase our own sophistication about high quality nonfiction, to talk about nonfiction, to read it aloud, to display it, to add it to our reading lists, to participate in its selection for library and curriculu use. Textbooks alone can be dreary teachers. Fiction alone gives students an incomplete view of literature. Nonfiction of excellence has much to offer classrooms everywhere.

Truth *is* stranger than Fiction, but it is because Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn't.

Mark Twain, *Wit & Wisecracks*

Library Resources for Nonfiction

Peggy Wargo

Teenagers who watch television love to read. If you want to find out what subject they like to read about, just ask what they've seen in the past few weeks on television.

Many young people are interested in "taboo" topics which may affect their lives: sex, drugs, divorce, child abuse, incest. Some want to know everything that exists concerning their favorite entertainer or sports hero, the latest cars, occult subject or computers. They want reassurance about their bodies, how to dress, how to have and be a friend, how to get a job, how to make money or how to excel in "their" sport.

It seems that most of the subjects which today's teenagers want to read about have few books written about them. However, there are usually many magazine and newspaper articles written on them. The old access through Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature is still useful today. Because it is printed in monthly volumes, many students can use it at the same time. It indexes one hundred and seventy-five magazines.

A new tool, now available in many public and high school libraries, is also extremely useful for finding current information on "today's" subjects: the Magazine Index. It comes in the form of a microfilm which is loaded on a machine exclusively for this purpose, making it easy to use. The Magazine Index contains indexes of over four hundred magazines covering the last 5 years. It includes all of the periodicals which are listed in Reader's Guide in addition to over two hundred more. The format is similar to that of Reader's Guide. It starts with the subject; then a list of related subjects to check for further information when appropriate; subheadings of the main subject; the specific title of an article; the volume and date of the issue; and the page number. There is a similar tool for accessing newspaper articles, called the Newspaper Index. Most public libraries have a reference source, The Connecticut Union List of Periodicals, which enables a student to locate the magazine or newspaper if their local library does not subscribe to it.

An example of one useful new periodical indexed in the Magazine Index is Interview. This newspaper-formatted publication features monthly interviews with prominent popular people.

Facts on File is printed monthly on three-ring binder paper. A cumulative index is available yearly; and a five year index is

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Peggy Wargo is Assistant Director of the Fairfield Public Library, Past President of the New England Library Association and ex President of the Connecticut Library Association.

also printed at appropriate intervals. Facts on File bills itself as a weekly news digest. It has easy to understand directions to facilitate its use.

Newsbank is a reference source which uses a microfiche format. It is accompanied by a paper index which is arranged by subject. Newsbank microfiche have portions of actual articles that have appeared in newspapers from over one hundred United States cities.

Another source of information is Current Biography. A paperback is published monthly and contains a full page biography and photograph of people of current interest. A hard-cover book is compiled annually and it has a five year index to make it easier to locate information.

I remember a discussion my husband and I had shortly after we met. He told me that he did not read. As our discussion progressed, I realized he meant that he only read magazine articles and newspapers, and he didn't consider that "reading." I have since convinced him that he was really reading. As an aside, having a librarian in the family has changed his reading habits; he now is a voracious reader of books as well as periodicals.

As a librarian, I would like to make three pleas to teachers who are assigning nonfiction reading and research papers to young people. One: Know yourself what is available on the subject before assigning it. Frequently, librarians are requested to help teenagers find three books on a subject for an assignment, when no books or only one book have been published or the library owns nothing on that subject. Two: If you have researched the library's collection in relation to an assignment and many students are going to need to use the same sources, inform the school and public librarian about the length of time students will be looking for the material. The librarians can arrange special housing or loan arrangements to give all of the students equal access to the information. If you work with the librarian far in advance, it is possible to have additional sources purchased or borrowed for the students' use. Three: Think of encyclopedias as useful. Encourage your students to use them. They have their place. Encyclopedias are excellent for the following reasons:

1. They are written or edited by leading experts on the subject.
2. They provide beginning knowledge and understanding about an unfamiliar subject.
3. They provide a superb overview of a subject.
4. The articles are followed by a list of related subject articles and often bibliographies; this aids in developing logical thinking; developing the skill needed to use a library card catalog effectively.

I would suggest asking that students use at least two encyclopedias as well as other current materials (again based on the subject and the availability of print information). The reason I recommend more than one encyclopedia be used is that each is set up and written a bit differently. Using two encyclopedias will help to discriminate between various sources and to learn their strengths and weaknesses.

Some Readers Prefer Nonfiction

Faith H. Hektoen

Aidan Chambers, who writes effectively about how to develop readers among young people, stresses literary reading since he believes it is that which so particularly helps to extend experience and knowledge of life, stretches the imagination, challenges and changes us, and allows us to perceive many kinds of human happenings. One of his professors emphasized that literature, i.e., fiction, plays, poetry, "explains, recreates and orders human experiences in a unique way" and calls this a "framing experience." These are interesting and positive concepts which, however, fail to recognize that research in reading responses rather consistently shows that among boys and men it is nonfiction which they choose to read. Further studies show that often they do not enjoy fiction, would not select it by choice. It is possible that the boredom and repugnance for English, too frequent, stems from disinterest in fiction, that the stress on fiction may actually create non-readers.

The background for this reaction concerns us less than the fact, as we teachers, librarians and parents focus on reading for enjoyment in our efforts to create young, competent, committed readers who will be both life-long readers and life-long learners.

Checking through a major reading list for Young Adults by Regina Minudri for a major LSCA funded project for Young Adults in California in the late 1970's, I saw the heavy preponderance, over 3 to 1, of nonfiction titles chosen hoping to develop readers among non-interested young adults. The project became a recognized success and, as such, the list (now out-of-print) was published by the California Library Association and sold across the country.

What does this offer for high school English classes? The idea of developing familiarity with well-written and well-produced books in subject areas appealing to older boys and some girls, such as the natural world and the sciences, sociology, archeology, ballet and other arts, on biography and autobiography, on history, on travel, with stunning photos sometimes, that can be used for reading lists and for discussion. Books that are written with veracity and enthusiasm, will lend themselves to written reports, or, better, to oral discussion

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to stimulate other readers. Such discussions can include aspects of the book; impact on reader searching for more on the subject, or by the same author; the style of writing; controversy as spur for research; growth of experience through portrayal of an interior world, or actual discoveries; or understanding of a people or a cause--a pushing back of non-awareness and an opening to life's opportunities.

Appended is a list selected of such books, some in paperback, some, though out-of-print, available easily in libraries, all good reading, arranged by topics which can be used or not.

Bon appetit!

WORDS AS IMAGES

Hamilton	Mythology
Newman	Strictly Speaking
Bober	A Restless Spirit (Robert Frost)
Hansberry	To Be Young, Gifted and Black
Bronowski	The Ascent of Man
Eiseley	Darwin's Century
Kopper	The Wild Edge

WORKING..Yesterday, Today, Tommorrow

Clark	Civilization
Geyer	Buying the Night Flight
Herriot	All Creatures Great and Small
O'Keeffe	Georgia O'Keeffe
Cousteau	Cousteau's Calypso
Terkel	Working
Hodgman	Sky Stars
Lane	The New Explorers
O'Connor	Maybe You Belong In A Zoo
d'Amboise	Leap Year
Bentley	Winter Season
Ruttenculter	Pianist's Progress
Evans	The Micromillenium
Toffler	The Third Wave

AS IT WAS

Renault	The Nature of Alexander
Kelly	Eleanor of Aquitaine
Jenkins	Elizabeth the Great

Grey	Peter the Great
Morrison	Columbus
dePauw	Founding Mothers
Hoople	As I Saw It
Bishop	The Day Lincoln Was Shot
Brown	Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee
Tuchman	The Guns of August
Reid	Escape from Colditz
Toland	Adolph Hitler
Vinkle	The Short Life of Sophie Scholl
Hersey	Hiroshima
Davis	Behind Barbed Wire
Wong	Fifth Chinese Daughter
Page	Tim Page's Nam

DIVERSE WORLDS

Sparks	The Discovery of Animal Behavior
Adamson	Born Free
Cousteau	Dolphins
Lopez	Of Wolves and Men
Asimov	Exploring the Earth and the Cosmos
Graham	The Changing Desert
Jacobs	The Death and Life of Great American Cities
Barzini	The Europeans
Heng	Son of the Revolution
Lee	Russian Journal

A TRAVELER'S LIFE

Heyerdahl	Kontiki
Heyerdahl	The Tigris Expedition
Hillary	From the Ocean to the Sky
Graham	Dove
Jenkins	A Walk Across America
Read	Alive
Wortman	Almost Too Late

Truth is the most valuable thing we have. Let us economize it.

Mark Twain, Wit & Wisecracks

A Primary Source Method of Teaching Biography

Sharon R. Lichtman

"Dear Abby: I am a fourteen-year-old bride. My parents don't know yet, and I'm afraid to tell them. The worst thing is that my husband just got deported to Mantua..." The urge to find out more is almost irresistible. Voyerism or worthy interest in one's fellow humban beings? Call it what you will, most of us love to discover others' secrets. Gossip and shared confidences, talk shows and interviews, letters to "Dear Abby" about the most intimate facts--all these attest to our curiosity about others. Capitalizing on that curiosity, I teach a nonfiction unit on primary source biography that has proved to be one of the most successful units I present to my high school students.

Brief Description of the Biography Unit

We begin by studying varied selections about people by authors who knew their subjects personally. The selections come from books, periodicals, films, and television. Students discuss the selections and write short pieces about them. At appropriate times, students are asked to write about people they know personally, including themselves, in ways inspired by the selections. We conclude with a relatively long paper written by each student about someone he or she knows--a biography or personality profile based on primary sources (interview, memory, observations, and opinion.) Students become real biographers.

This unit is easily adapted to students of different grades. It has proved successful for both my most gifted and my least academically able students, even for a group of advanced English-as-a-second-language students. The unit can be presented in several weeks or may be expanded for a term. The success of the unit is due to its flexibility, adaptability, and the universal appeal of looking through a window into the lives of others.

Objectives of the Unit

(1) Concepts

The basic objective of the unit is to help students understand how raw material may be presented so that it acquires personal meaning. They come to realize that facts by themselves are rather boring until they have been shaped, interpreted, and reacted to. They discover that "facts" and "the truth" are slippery little critters, hard to grasp and pin down.

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The content of the material leads to another basic objective. Finding out more about people, their values, behavior, the influences on them, their effects on others--this widening of experience in itself makes the unit valuable to the students. To a greater extent than in more literary units, students are expected to communicate about subjects which they can develop a genuine interest in and a unique knowledge of.

(2) Skills

All four years of English communication (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) are used continuously in the unit.

Composition as a process is practiced. Pre-writing is emphasized through the frequent gathering of material and consideration about form, organization, and style. Students write, rewrite, and edit.

Additional composition skills include: finding a subject; choosing the appropriate form; selecting and compressing information; using effective details; developing style; practice in exposition, narration, and description; note-taking; and outlining.

Listening and speaking skills include: discussion; developing questions for the interview; interviewing; being interviewed; and helping other students revise papers.

Reading and observing skills are enhanced through the study of many materials in different media. Students infer from details, draw conclusions, generalize, compare and contrast, analyze, interpret, find universal themes, and evaluate.

Critical thinking skills are developed in many assignments.

(Library research skills are not addressed in this unit, however, since secondary sources are not used when the students write their biographies.)

Selection of Materials

Materials are chosen from the regular English anthologies, from biographies and autobiographies on the curriculum or in the library, from newspaper and magazine articles, and from students writing. I like to include personal and biographical essays, some poems, one or more films or videotapes, one or more interviews, a full-length book, and a play. Subjects are male and female, ordinary folks as well as some greats, ranging from young to old, and of different races or cultures. In all cases, the writer knew their subjects personally.

The greater the variety of materials, the greater the chances of finding something that will really affect almost every student at least sometimes. In addition, an extensive variety lets students examine the many methods that writers can choose when they try to capture a bit of life in words. Both reading appreciation and writing techniques are enhanced.

The sources for materials are almost endless. I list some as examples only, ones we have found enjoyable and useful. Current articles have included an account of a man who vows to change his life when saved from execution for murder, a profile of a "hit man," several "poor youngster breaks through to success" stories from the sports sections. We read a dramatic excerpt from Alive where the members of a soccer team, stranded in the Andes, resort to cannibalism.

Although my students seem to thrive on the morbid and sensational, they also appreciate the humor and irony in essays by Art Buchwald and James Thurber and in "Charles" by Shirley Jackson. They like to find out about people who struggle against poverty, racial prejudice, bereavement, or handicaps, or who otherwise achieve greatness. A few favorite full-length books are The Story of My Life (Helen Keller), Nigger (Dick Gregory), Go Ask Alice (anonymous), and Death Be Not Proud (John Gunther).

Interviews may be found in Studs Terkel's Working or from periodicals. Also useful are poems focusing on single events, such as "The Whipping" (Robert Hayden), "The Rebel" (Mari Evans), "The Road Not Taken" (Robert Frost). Films which document lives are treated as any written selections would be. My classes have observed "Lonely Boy: the Story of Paul Anka," a wildly successful singer at age 19; and "A Day in the Life of Bonnie Consolo," a woman born without arms who leads an ordinary satisfying life with remarkable lack of self-pity. They have read and seen plays such as The Miracle Worker, The Glass Menagerie, and The Elephant Man.

Whatever the selection, I keep two basic questions in mind: Does the story of this person interest us enough so that we will want to find meaning in it? Is the presentation interesting?

Assignments (Discussion, Short Writings, Final Project)

(1) Discussion

The Content: Describe the subject's personality. What influenced him or her the most? How am I like or unlike this person? Of whom does this person remind me, from history, literature, or experience? What values does this person have that I admire or dislike? What helped this person succeed or fail? What advice could I give this person?

The Form: In what order were the events presented, and why? Does the writer seem reliable or biased? What is the connection between the narrator and the subject? What techniques were used for effective narration and description? What form was used (diary, letters, interview, narrative essay, etc.)? What information was probably omitted, and why?

(2) Written Assignments about the Materials

(Earlier assignments may be based on recall and summary, but later ones should involve interpretation and evaluation. I select several assignments or give choices.)

Write a synopsis. Write a summary.

Rewrite the selection to show how the person's life would change if the environment or some major event changed.

Write an essay analyzing the factors that contributed to the person's successes or failures.

Rewrite the selection or part of it from another narrative point of view.

Write an essaya of comparison and/or contrast between the subject and yourself, someone you know, a literary character, or a famous person.

Write an essay of definition (what is a "hero", "friend", "successful life", "tragic life"), using the selections for examples.

Write an essay explaining what the subject means to the author and/or to you.

Predict the subject's future, justifying your point by details from the selection.

Write a book review, evaluating content and style.

(3) Written Assignments Inspired by the Materials

(These are more personal, creative or imaginative. I often give choices and allow plenty of time for pre-writing discussion, note-taking, and planning. Some of the projects may be done in groups of two to four students.)

Make a collage of clippings from magazines and newspapers about yourself or someone you know--events, personality, philosophy or values, goals. (This is an effective warm-up exercise.

Develop a short narrative poem into a short story.

Describe a person or place that has been important to you, so that your readers can picture it and understand its significance.

Imagine yourself having lived a full 110 years. What would you like to see in a glowing obituary about your life and accomplishments?

Imagine yourself or someone you know living in another time and/or place. Write the new life story.

What is your definition of "friend", "heroic person", "tragic life", or "successful life"? Give examples from your own experience and observations.

Narrate an embarrassing, frightening, or otherwise significant event from real life.

Write a poem which captures a memorable event or moment.

Write a dialogue between two people (you may be one of them), to present a conflict, resolved or not.

Write a letter to the Newspaper--Dear Abby, Dear Ann, Confidential Chat.

Write a children's book based on a true-life childhood event.

Write to a pen pal.

(4) Writing the Final Project (Biography or Personality Profile)

The primary source biography and the personality profile both require students to get information first-hand and to apply the concepts considered throughout the unit. Attention is given to each step of the composing process. The biography is essentially narrative, with certain events developed more fully, but personality is also revealed. The personality profile is more descriptive, but basic biographical facts are given; the writer also reflects freely about the subject. With younger students or classes that have recently done a lot of narrative writing, the personality profile may be more appropriate; sophisticated writers enjoy it, too.

Step 1: Choosing the Subject. Students may be assigned to interview each other in class or may be given the alternative of finding a subject outside class. Possibilities include (a) a friend or family member, to understand him or her more fully; (b) someone from a foreign land, to find out whether or not it is a "small world" (c) someone of a different generation, to explore how much the generation gap exists; (d) someone whose work interests the student, to discover more about a career or vocation; (e) someone the student admires and would like to know better.

Students are warned at this point not write about issues so personal that they would be unwilling to share the papers at least with their subject, several chosen classmates, and the teacher. I always promise not to read the papers aloud without permission from both writer and subject. Names of the subjects may be changed.

Step 2. Gathering Information. Much material is gained from an interview. Students are encouraged to add memories, observations, and opinions. Note-taking is required, with headings.

Some teenagers are too self-conscious or nervous to get started with the interview. A step-by-step approach with plenty of instructions helps. We generate interview questions in class. Less able students are helped by handouts listing questions under headings. In my experience, the classroom interviews usually elicit a lot of animated, purposeful, enjoyable conversation.

These questions are some my students have found effective in the interview. Describe two of your happiest and two of your saddest childhood experiences. Compare yourself to your best friend. What part of your life would you change? Which people have been most important to you, and how? (Questions about personality may be quite fanciful.) What would you save from your home in a fire? What would you do with a few million dollars? What would you like to be famous for? Pick three words to describe yourself. What do you think you'll be doing in ten years?

Step 3. Organzing the Paper. An outline is required as a plan, since the final paper will be in narrative or essay (not question and answer) form. Students must now decide about the order of events and ideas, the dominant themes, and the omission of ineffective details. They may find the need to get more information. Most students find it difficult to make the transition from their notes to this outline. I often suggest basic headings under which they may organize the details. A simple outline might have these headings: Family; Childhood; Present Life (events and activities); Personality and Values; Predictions for the Future. I also demonstrate ways in which the material can be presented non-chronologically.

Step 4. Writing and Rewriting. As students prepare their first drafts, they are reminded of effective techniques recently studied. They must decide on the narrative point of view. Openings may be a quotation, a vivid descriptive detail, or a dramatic event--not a "James was born in 1968 in St. Elizabeth's Hospital" approach. One senior girl began: "In October of 1983, my stepsister Dawn moved into my room, my bed, and my bureau."

The writers have to make the body of the paper more than a list of events, intriguing enough to hold their own interest as well as their readers'. One junior boy got stuck interviewing a classmate who claimed to have a boring life and who revealed little about himself. He began, "Joe says 'My life is at the edge of boredom. I lead a humdrum life.' Since I've known Joe, he seems to fit the statement." Then he developed the paper with humor and sensitivity, finding worthwhile qualities beneath the "boring" surface. In another memorable biography, the writer found her own memories for the interview, and wrote an account of a favorite cousin who had died of cancer at age 16. She left her readers tearful and inspired.

The successful conclusion in particular demands a clear understanding of the subject. Sometimes the writers are surprised by what they have discovered. A sophomore girl wrote about her mother: "Now, I can feel sorry for her and what she had to go through." A freshman girl concluded an account of her brother with his own words: "If I could have one wish, I would be a kid and live my life with no mistakes--at least, not make the same ones again and again."

Step 5. Revision and Editing: The first readable draft is shared with one or two other students for helpful comments. The final draft is carefully proofread, sometimes with the help of other students or the teacher.

Step 6. Sharing the Wealth: The writers share their final papers by passing them around to chosen classmates. With their permission, I read some aloud, sometimes anonymously. Some get published in the school's literary magazine.

Conclusion

The primary source papers offer frankness, sensitivity, and insight. They are lively and fun to read. There are always a few students who resist this assignment, as any other. However, many students tell me that this project has meant enough to them that they want to keep their papers. Often their subjects want copies, too. And often, so do I. What more could the reader of a hundred student papers ask for?

> He wanted to make her understand that this change of intention on his part was caused by the unspected misconduct of her uncle. He desired that she should know exactly how the matter stood; that he had been led to suppose that her uncle would give her some small fortune; that he had been disappointed, and had a right to feel the disappointment keenly; and that in consequence of this blow to his expectations, he must put off his marriage. But he wished her also to understand at the same time that this did not in the least mar his love for her; that he did not join her at all in her uncle's fault. All this he was anxious to convey to her, but he did not know how to get it said in a manner that would not be offensive to her personally, and that should not appear to accuse himself of sordid motives. He had begun by declaring that he would tell her all; but sometimes it is not easy, that task of telling a person everything. There are things which will not get themselves told.
>
> Anthony Trollope, The Small House at Allington

From Biographical Research to Presentation to Writing

Gregory Rubano

"I'd used and manipulated Nicholas and Alexandra; it was time to pay the price." Dressed in the garb of a Russian monk, Rasputin gave a compelling account of his own assassination. Following this, he briefly discussed his first mystical experiences and spoke of his entry into the imperial court. He then graciously accepted questions from the sixteen-year-old reporters who were attending the five minute press conference so as to write what they hoped would be an equally compelling feature article. Their sagacious editor-in-chief had previously instructed them in the possible structures and focuses of feature article writing.

I was tired of getting lame encyclopedic biographies. Tired of the invariable chronological arrangement of details. I was frustrated and worried by the students' inability to distinguish insignificant from salient. I was unable to capitalize on what they had produced ("Doesn't anyone want to read this paper on Truman?").

The press conference was a climax of the biographical research which the students had done (for complete sequence of unit see chart). Its purpose was motivational for, in general, presentation makes for more rigorous preparation since few want to make display of their ignorance. However, with regard to the writing that followed, it was intended to be what Mayher (Learning to Write/Writing to Learn, Boyton/Cook Publishers, 1983, p. 5) would call a "percolating" moment in the composing process. It was a rehearsal of ideas to be expressed in writing, a chance to revise as part of the transition from taking about to writing about.

Limited to climactic moments, these presentations encouraged economical feature articles with the climaxes being used as "grabber" introductions. Their brevity made for the necessity of careful follow-up questioning.

Of course, the student reporter role was a convenience to get them to listen and question and to write down. The questioning was a task functionally aimed at information gathering to fortify possible themes and approaches which were to be used in the writing of the article. Since they force "shaping at the moment of utterance," (Britton in Mayher Learning to Write/Writing to Learn, p. 6) both the questioning and the responses

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evoked articulations which were incorporated in the subsequent writing. Students reported that they frequently discovered additional emphases for their articles because of this stage. Because each student was required to also "write-up" his own presented figure into a lengthy feature, the questioning was seen as pragmatic.

The "presented figure" feature was not to be done until the student had first written his brief article on another's figure and conferenced with the teacher. The conferences' purpose was three-fold: to identify gossipy or inconsistent tones; to discourage rote reliance upon chronological organization and extraneous information; to have students recognize a too cursory approach plagued by omissions and inaccuracies.

The revised work was published under the feature article section of a "growing" newspaper begun previously as a class project and already including sections on front page, caricatures and political cartoons, and satiric editorials. All articles were published after final editing.

The presentation and the first feature article were preparatory steps for writing the final feature article. Previous to submission of this work, another student conducted peer editing along the dimensions identified on a mastery assignment sheet and paralleling the conference emphases. Those meeting all requirements were submitted to a panel of editors who, as similar panels had done for the other sections, chose the best ones.

The next step in the process was dramatization. In groups of four, students selected one biographical figure from among the four. They were to dramatize a crucial moment in that figure's life by unfurling it, that is they were to show its significances by establishing it as the culmination of previous moments. To give structure to the dramatization and to introduce them to a convention used by biographers, the moment was to be introduced in the beginning through the artifice of a public announcement or by an interior monologue context, including the reading of a letter as it is being written. In short, any device to quickly establish the moment and allow for a dissolve into flashback scenes of exposition was encouraged. (Example of public announcement--Anwar Sadat announcing and signing the Camp David Accord or Dr. Christian Barnard announcing success in first heart transplant; example of letter--Julius Rosenberg writing a letter to his children after being found guilty or Geraldine Ferraro writing a letter of acceptance to Mondale for VP post).

In addition to providing structure for the writing, this format was chosen to force students to examine and select particular moments (decisions, deliberations, conflicts) that represented the drama of a life and that played upon the mood of the climactic scene. Important influences could be written into the script, not merely identified. And of course the personage could come alive!

Students were offered the opportunity to have these scenes videotaped with all the conveniences that a dissolve button on a VCR camera offers. The VCR production appears to stimulate a return to the research. For one thing, student concern with accurately portrayed settings provokes research into dress, furnishings, etc. Secondly, students are required to use research to support any interpretations. Wild speculation was discouraged; information conjecture was allowed.

It is possible to stop here. In fact, stopping at any of the points along the way is possible especially since, like many units, this one evolved from self-contained components. Constrictions of time, resources, and energies will determine the length of the unit.

Clearly, the last stage is ambitious and often goes beyond the talents and composition of the class. With the aide of the school video club, the most promising productions are judiciously edited to be trailers to stimulate interest in reading about the figure. Students write the promotional narration which incorporate the scenes. Original researchers are encouraged to be consultants if they are not actors or actresses. Previewed by selected students, the productions are shown to other classes. After the showing, all written materials about the figure are made available, including feature articles culled by librarians from newspapers and magazines, the feature articles written by the students, and full biographies of differing difficulties and emphases. Reading is still the name of the game.

Overview: Sequence of Biography Unit

Preparatory:	Review of the purpose and structure of a feature article. Analysis of selected feature articles involving special interest to adolescents.
Selection:	Students select biographical figure to be researched. No vocational or national restrictions, contemporary or modern or whatever, Disney or Rasputin.
Research:	Instruction in identification and use of appropriate references. Library Scavenger Hunt: Students are given a list of questions about a range of figures. They compete to be first to find all the answers.
Focused Presentation:	Students to assume the identity of the biographical figure chosen. "Character" dress optional but encouraged.

Class press conference during which the student (in first person) describes a climax of the figure's life and answers questions from a group of reporters.

Writing: For each conference, a group of three reporters assigned to write a brief feature article based upon information from the presentation and follow-up questioning.

Conference with teacher: Focus upon tone, organization and accuracy.

Revisions submitted.

All published as part of newspaper section.

More Writing: Following presentation and above writing, each student to write more comprehensive feature article on her own presented figure.

Peer editing along the dimensions of previous conference.

Submission and revision according to teacher interim assessment.

Board of student editors select the best articles.

Dramatization: Each group to create dramatization of crucial moment in selected figure's life. (structure of such described in text).

Dissemination: Best scripts re-done to be trailers to stimulate other students in other classes to read about the figures.

All reading materials about figure available after showing.

In Search of Self and Others: Reading and Writing Autobiography

Margery Staman Miller

At a time when the educational community is concerned with basic skills, the widespread lack of critical thinking and the media influenced ideas of its students, a mode of writing and reading which promotes intellectual independence as well as a sense of personal responsibility seems worth pursuing. Autobiography as a form of literature and as a form of personal writing emphasizes the individual's own voice. In an integrated reading and writing approach to autobiography, the student's own awareness of and ability to collect data, to analyze and synthesize information, and to write for a public audience are emphasized.

The first step of such an "autobiographical process" is made up of three components: prewriting, personal writing, and strengthening of the reader-writer relationship. The teacher can create an atmosphere conducive to prewriting by encouraging students to recollect past events and feelings. Students can be guided in the collection and examination of raw data such as diaries, letters to and by themselves, and photos which will aid their recall and identification of significant events or relationships in their individual pasts. The preparation of video and audiotapes of the students as they interact with adults and peers in their immediate environment can serve as additional raw data.

Personal writing is the second component of the preparation or data collecting stage. Exposing students to the techniques and uses of personal or dialogue journals is particularly valuable when the focus is on the individual collecting and storing information he deems important. Additionally, providing opportunities for students to participate in "memory writing" exercises (Moffett and Wagner, 1983) and to develop personal "life" lines are necessary if students are going to add to their store of writing resources.

The third component of the data collecting stage, the strengthening of the reader-writer relationship, is often neglected or handled in a cursory fashion in many middle school and secondary classrooms. It is most helpful for the student to read autobiographies of persons who interest him in order to compare some of his own experiences with those of the selected individuals. In doing such reading the student will have an opportunity to look at the early memories, the family life, the interests and work, and even the emotions of an historical or famous person he would choose as a

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role model. In true autobiography (Billie Jean, Black Boy) as well as in fictionalized autobiography (A Gathering of Days, On the Frontier with Mr. Audubon) the writer invites the reader to witness and to participate vicariously in real life experiences. Experiences with such material as a reader can help the student gain insight into his own behavior and identity, and it ultimately can influence him as a writer.

The focus on "real" lives can be extended beyond books to the reading of true stories in magazines written expressly for adolescents and teens and to the use of sketches of the famous and not so famous members of the nation and the community included frequently as part of the daily newspaper. Finally, persons in one's community who have made a mark in a career or whose lives have developed in an unusual manner due to a handicap, a career change, or an unexpected occurrence in their life can be additional interesting sources of information and models for the student writer.

The second step in the "autobiographical process" is the analysis and synthesis of the collected data described in step one. The vidid description of a series of recurring similar events or of a single significant event which signals change in an individual's life in what a writer can be encouraged to share with his audience in a personal autobiographical sketch. Such an analysis would be valuable for the adolescent student who remembers and describes his feelings as a frightened eight-year-old going to a new school, and who goes on to describe himself as a teenager who was daring enough to recently venture on a scouting endurance hike which took him alone into unknown terrain. Such a deeply personal example would clearly show the student author how perspective and attitude can change over time.

This leads naturally into the third step of the "autobiographical process" which is writing for a public audience. Because the student is in control of his subject matter he seems better able to carefully select and to order information that will get his audience involved in the suspense and drama he perceives in his own life. Not only does the student's autobiographical writing reveal more self-awareness, but as writing, it also seems to reflect more control, more commitment, and more power by the author. An additional benefit associated with autobiographical writing is that students seem more willing and better equipped to edit their own written work because they are convinced of their own authority and knowledge of the subject, namely themselves.

In a recent argument for autobiographical writing and reading, M.B. Boegman (1980) said "...in writing about the self, one is never truly confined to the self--the student must see himself in relation to other people, his environment, his culture, his social class, and even his government." The "autobiographical process" seems to help the student clarify his own life, so that he can better put his ideas and goals into a context related to other people and even to institutions. In conclusion, then, autobiography is a form of personal writing which encourages the student to learn more about himself and to make connections with other people by exploring as a reader and writer both the worlds of fiction and of nonfiction.

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"You are so hard on one, my dear, with your running after honesty, that one is not able to tell the real facts as they are. You make one speak in such a bald, naked way."

"Ah, you think that anything naked must be indecent; even truth."

"I think it is more proper-looking and better suited, too, for the world's work, when it goes about with some sort of a garment on it. We are so used to a leaven of falsehood in all we hear and say, now-a-days, that nothing is more likely to deceive us than the absolute truth. If a shopkeeper told me that his wares were simply middling, of course, I should think that they were not worth a farthing."

Anthony Trollope

Consider Autobiography

Lois Josephs Fowler

Consider autobiography as the basis for an English course. Carefully chosen selections from this little-used genre can invite and challenge students in both their reading and writing. While as a form autobiography lacks some of the imaginative qualities of fiction, it offers similar insights into the inner and outer lives of people. Moreover, in providing their own experiences it has certain advantages over fiction. A teacher can create a remarkably effective integration of literature and writing by using autobiographical readings that evoke for students memories, feelings, and insights about significant parts of their lives, while at the same time working with them to develop essays about their experiences as a central goal of the course.

Until recently most English instructors made relatively little use of biography, autobiography, or journalistic writing in their classes. Models of nonfiction used in the teaching of writing tended to be limited to the familiar essay, the speech, or the formal argument, while "literature" in the curriculum consited almost entirely of story, play, and poem. We neglected study of the telling of true stories--or of stories that were at least offered to us as true.

Our friends who teach history were quicker to tap the riches of such writings as the confessions of St. Augustine or of Rousseau, the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini, the diaries of John Quincy Adams, the memoirs of Richard Wright, the journals of Virginia Woolf, and the reminiscences of Lillian Hellman. They also found, as they opened up new areas of social history and made use of oral interviewing, that students who wrote brief histories of their families as projects in appropriate courses gained both higher motivation for doing reading, research, and writing, and deeper insight into the history of the times being examined.

If we in English have begun to catch up it is partly because we have been forced to. As scholars and teachers of literature and writing we must come to terms with an enormous and growing body of biography, autobiography, and reportage, some of it of high literary merit. Much of what the educated public reads--not only for information but also for stimulus to the imagination--falls into these categories of nonfiction. As the principal literary journals reveal, we review this writing, and as our curricula now demonstrate, we are making room for it in our courses.

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Teaching some of these works of nonfiction can be, as I suggest, a reward as well as a professional duty. One can introduce such works into syllabi otherwise made up of fiction. In a course entitled "Health and Illness in Literature" which uses novels, plays, and stories, I include selections from Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' DEATH AND DYING and Susan Sontag's ILLNESS AS METAPHOR. But since courses composed entirely of nonfiction possess distinctive characters, and since I want to argue the peculiar merits of autobiography, I should like to describe a course of mine which has only autobiographical materials as readings.

The course uses different kinds of autobiographical writing, drawing from journals, letters, and diaries as well as whole works. This variety shows students that these authors tell their personal stories with methods and forms of writing--description, explanation, narration, and argument; informal reflections and formal communications--that they have already learned in composition classes. In dealing with each example we examine critically its content, to see what the author chooses to include, emphasize, or omit, and then study its style to see how it complements the substance. From this evidence we can attempt to infer the writer's purposes in writing. This problem, while more familiar to the historian than to the traditional literary theorist, plays a legitimate if minor part in the understanding and appreciation of nonfiction.

In reading the NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS, for example, students can analyze how the author, the famed escaped slave and spokesman for American blacks, fulfills in a relatively few pages his dual purpose of telling the story of his youth and of producing a convincing polemic against slavery. Douglass does this partly by selection. He omits most of what had happened to him that did not bear immediately on his condition as a slave and a fugitive. The episodes he then relates are gripping in their dramatic qualities, appealing to his reader's senses of the tragic, the pathetic, and the moral. But they are also varied in their effects, incorporating the mundane and even a touch of the comic. Douglass adds to the persuasiveness of his account by distinguishing among members of the master class as to their faults and virtues; his villain is slavery rather than any individual or group. Such reading of a text both develops students' perceptions and critical abilities and provides a start for considering what might be included in autobiographical sketches of their own.

To give focus to the course beyond its autobiographical character I limit it largely to American sources, taking a few from earlier Western societies, and arrange readings in a fairly consistent chronological order. I also select as many women as men for authors because of my interest in feminist studies.

While there is relatively little autobiographical writing to choose from before the modern era, I use several pieces from earlier periods. These I choose for their intrinsic interest as well as for the way they reveal the continuity of human concerns through time. The poet Horace muses about what his life has meant to him, recalling the delights and pains of love among other events. He contents himself, however, as well he might as the beneficiary of Maecenas' favor, with moderation and reason as guiding principles. A medieval journal reveals the reports and reflections of Margery deKempe on her experiences. Such evocations and evidence of life, the student learns, are almost all those of the small minority of people who belonged to the privileged classes. We leap from the more general to the highly specific with Samuel Pepys' richly detailed descriptions of life in Restoration London, then begin to evoke autobiographical writing in America with readings from William Bradford and Samuel Sewall. Bradford subordinates his own story to his theme of the struggle of Calvinist heroes with the American wilderness and wayward human nature; OF PLYMOUTH PLANTATION is history with a moral and Bradford its moralist. Sewall's diaries are another matter. His attempts to realize himself, amid struggles of duty and conscience with several different sorts of worldliness, are at the heart of his writing.

Such materials, I should add, can be found easily in paperback in any good book store today. Many of them appear in anthologies of diaries or other personal writings, but even when they are published separately they are usually reasonably priced.

By now the course has become entirely American in its sources, sharpening its focus. Franklin's autobiography lends itself well to discussion of the relationships among his style of writing and choice of materials and the kind of man he was. Students will discover without too much trouble that Franklin's revelations of his own errors and inadequacies are small matters compared to his recitation of successes, and that the plain and modest style he adopts is really a counterpart of his strategy for letting other people get the credit when you want to get something done. It is but a short step from there to ask why he has been called the "quintessential American." His Calvinist background is evident, but transformed here into a combination of pragmatic bows toward the utility of religion (orreligiosity), an energetic pursuit of worldly successes, and a confusion of ideals and materialism that clearly foreshadows Babbitt and Gatsby.

For the nineteenth century the course draws first on several transcendentalist writers--Emerson, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller--to reveal concerns of intellectuals living in a democratic society. Emerson's is the voice of encouragement, optimism, mastery. Thoreau offers his reflective, detailed account of individual thoughts and feelings in his encounters with changeless nature in a changing world. Fuller's journals, unlike her more formal writing, suggest the mingling of child and woman in her romantic reactions to the heady world around her. The journals of Hawthorne, a critic of transcendentalism, record his jest about the

Brook Farm cow who refused to give milk while in a state of contemplation. Harriet Beecher Stowe, recounting the difficulties of her home life, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, telling of her battles in the field of reform, provide two versions of the emergent feminism of the day, the domestic and the radical, that contrast with the intellectualism of Fuller. Stanton's EIGHTY YEARS AND MORE also opens up to students a method of relating one's childhood experiences to one's adult personality and concerns.

While probably all autobiography contains at least a little fiction, inserted unconsciously or otherwise, much fiction contains material that is consciously autobiographical. There is no reason not to treat the latter in a course of the kind I describe, and one of the most provocative pieces of writing I use is of that sort. Frances Perkins Gilman's THE YELLOW WALLPAPER evokes as much emotion in one way as Douglass' narrative does in another; both are fighting repression. Students respond strongly to the dilemma in the life of the narrator when she is confined to a room as mentally unbalanced and told that only rest can cure her. Gilman records her thoughts and feelings, ending with a denoument in which, through a burst of what may have been either irrationality or underlying reason, she causes her husband, traditional in his paternalism, to faint. Incidents in the book are so paced that each builds toward the climax, leaving no lulls for the reader. This pacing, together with that of Douglass' story, offers a model for the dramatic development of students' own stories.

The overwhelming majority of autobiographies have been written only recently, partly because that is when most human lives, most education, and most writing have taken place, but also because the importance we attribute to individual personality is a phenomenon of modern times. One result has been a true embarrassment of riches for the teacher selecting twentieth-century autobiographies for a course; it is hard to decide where to begin. However, I try to use ones that provide a variety of methods, a range of life styles, and of course, as much interest as possible for student readers. My current favorites include the autobiographical writings of Russell Baker, Maya Angelou, Margaret Mead, Rosalyn Carter, and Harry Truman. All these works can be readily found in paperback, but if whole books cannot be purchased instructors may be able to duplicate excerpts under certain conditions. Consult your local bookstore or library for the ground rules.

Why the above choices? With Baker, I want students to see how the writer can integrate his own personality with the ironic way in which he views life. In Angelou, students see a woman grow into strength and maturity in what is in some ways an alien culture. Her narrative and character descriptions have real power without being trite or cliched. Mead's BLACKBERRY WINTER is an autobiography that reveals a woman's growth as a professional, in this case as an anthropologist, together with her other experiences of life. Carter reports what it is like for a FIRST LADY FROM PLAINS to live in the White House as a participant in great events. Truman's memoirs are distinctive among Presidents' writings because of his humor, simplicity, and effective use of anecdote, and the human quality of the whole. DEAR BESS, a collection of Truman's letters to his wife from before their marriage until late in their lives, provides another view of the man, both touching and heartening. In each case I use only selections.

How are readings and discussions linked to writing assignments? In our discussion of each piece of autobiography, I try to find one or more ways in which the author's purposes, concerns, techniques, and effects can serve the needs of students in their attempts to understand, define, and report themselves. At first it takes a good deal of leadership on my part to bring such points out in class; as students become immersed in their study of self-evocation they grow more adept in discovering the application of reading to writing. I've mentioned that Douglass narrative as one which lends itself readily to learning about techniques. Another case, which better illustrates the transfer of self-perception from example to practice, is Margaret Mead's description of her movement toward maturity.

As to the definition of the students' own writing, I begin by telling them that they will write a number of short pieces of autobiography, eventually integrating them into one long piece according to designs of their own. While discussing the assigned readings I sometimes engage students in Rohman or Moffett-like exercises in invention so that they can convert thoughts about themselves into stories, descriptions, or arguments for the rest of the class with more ease and less inhibition. Their rough drafts then become additional readings for the class to discuss. Students who have learned to use word processors seem to me to carry out this conversion of thoughts into drafts with the most facility.

It is often difficult, however, to get students to begin extracting good material from their own minds, feelings, and memories. All instructors have favorite devices to spur them along; my method for helping the student to become a central character was learned from the late Gladys Schmitt, a colleague and a great teacher of writing. I ask students to place themself in a series of daily situations, and to describe in writing, in the fullest detail possible, their thoughts and actions as they proceed from beginning to end. Take a bath, I suggest, and describe each action, thought, and feeling that forms a part of your bath-taking from the moment of decision to bathe until you put your towel aside. The student can then apply this same attention to perception and recording of detail to other situations, perhaps ones that call up deeper emotions, such as arguments with family, friends, or foes, or threats to health or life. Other possible examples, ranging from the concrete circumstances of meeting a new friend or going to a party, to the more abstract circumstances of arriving at an intellectual position, are too many to number.

In the end, the autobiography sketches that students write, containing the lessons of purpose and technique learned from others and their deeper understanding of themselves, will best reveal the value of the readings used in the course. Making sense of one's life, inner and outer, depends heavily upon learning to tell one's own story, as Freud pointed out, and the autobiography that does most to awaken students' senses of their own human dimensions is the best choice in a course of this kind. Or, as Benedict Nightingale suggests in a piece on "Dramatists as Diarists" (NEW YORK TIMES, Aug. 12, 1984), "Actually, a successful notebook or diary offers more... It tells you about the observer as well as the observed. It leaves you feeling that a developing mind, a shifting sensibility, an evolving talent is simultaneously recording significant events, helping to shape them, and being influenced by them."

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How They Write: A Study of Writers' Self-Reports

Leif Fearn

When John Steinbeck wrote East of Eden, the writing circumstances were to his liking, he was experienced in the genre, his focus was clear, he had a publisher, and his seriousness was such that he approached the task as though it would be his last (Journal of a Novel, 1969). He also anguished widely and although he procrastinated at length, he trusted his experience.

> Now I have sat a week. It is Friday and I have seated out one page and a half. If I did not know this process so well, I would consider it a week of waste. (p. 12)

Steinbeck self-reported his writing in-event. Journal of a Novel reflects the experience of writers during the course of a career and students of writing during the course of learning. Unlike learners, however, Steinbeck trusted his competence and inclinations, so his experience did not negatively affect his achievement. He didn't view his experience as unique among writers, nor deleterious to the achievement of his goal.

Learners, because they do not enjoy Steinbeck's experienced achievement, tend not to enjoy Steinbeck's self-trust. Many suffer what Sullivan (1947) called the "delusion of uniqueness." A major psychodynamic obstacle, Sullivan's delusion causes its owners to think they are the only ones who feel this or that way, or who experience reality as they do. The delusion consumes deliberate attention, and because people can deliberately attend to only one unpracticed instance at a time (Cherry 1953), attention consumed by the delusion cannot be applied to composing. Therefore, people learning to write find it very difficult to persist productively in the deliberate and complex composing process when they do not perceive the universality of their own experience.

As a result, a serious double-bind occurs in writing class. Learners who haven't a record of significant writing achievement tend not to trust their writing experience; when they don't trust, they tend not to persist, and as they fail to persist, they lose the opportunity to accumulate a record of significant writing achievement. That writing teachers assure learners of struggle, pain, fluency, and euphoria as universals among writers is, at once, laudable and of little utility, for self-trust comes from experience, not assurance.

Leif Fearn writes both fiction and nonfiction on topics ranging from wolf behavior to the psychology of writing. He teaches writing to students in classrooms and teachers in both preparation and staff development.

One source of experience occurs directly. Maturing human beings achieve approximations of complex operations and thereby validate their effort. The other source occurs indirectly when, through observation of credible others, maturing humans recognize the universality of their effort.

There may be merit in English class in reading from Steinbeck's fiction, but there may be more in reading from his self-reported record. Isaac Asimov's Nightfall (1969) and Foundation (1951) are critical pieces by a shining light in science fictions's golden age, but his In Memory Yet Green (1979) and, to a lesser extent In Joy Still Felt (1980), tell a story with which struggling learners can identify. As massively prolific as Asimov has become, he had a beginning, and his beginning is not much different from anyone else's beginning. John Gardner's The Art of Fiction (1984), though not autobiographical, nevertheless self-reports episodes in his development as a writer. And the much heavier writing in The Essential Works of John Stuart Mill (1971) explicates Mill's earliest struggles with clear thinking and writing.

What's to be learned through reading writers' self-reports? With respect to Steinbeck, Asimov, Gardner, and Mill, it is the producing writer's process of learning and the vicarious experience associated with productive writing. Learners rarely focus on those. They rarely have the tools to read through the mind of a productive writer, and they rarely have the experience to appreciate struggles reflected in William Styron's statement, "Writing a novel is like walking on your knees from Vladivostok to Madrid," or Dorothy Parker's summation, "The only joy in writing is having done it."

Study of writers' self-reports occurs in the unit, "How They Write." A series of teacher readings, writing exercises, learner-selected readings, precis pieces, and efforts at generalization, the unit offers learners the opportunity to perceive their experience in the context of others who struggled similarly, achieved, and continued the struggle.

There are several cautions in such a study, however. Writers' self-reports do not adhere to the rhetoric or promised joy and fulfillment often purveyed in writing classes. Critical and perceptive readers may generalize that audiences select writers, writers do not select and write for audiences. They may decide, for the most part appropriately, that writers' work is painfully introspective, for real writers are Spartan workers not given to the indulgence of self-expression. Finally, it may surprise learners to discover that writers do not write what they know so much as they come to know because they are writers.

A study of writers' self-reports is revealing with respect to the nature of writing, and it is psychodynamically productive with respect to the delusion of uniqueness. It opens the door to the lives of enormously productive people while offering learners models of their own experience, even as they struggle with that experience.

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Truth is good manners; manners are a fiction.

Mark Twain, *Wit & Wisecracks*

Hot-Spots: The Journal as Nonfiction

Susan D. Cavallari

"We write to heighten our own awareness of life...to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospection..." - Anais Nin

One of the greatest universal human needs is the need for self-expression: "to put a name to the pain". Career change, trauma, crisis, joy are those events which often need written expression in order for us to comprehend loss, accept change, or begin again.

When we think in these terms, we invariably assume an adult point of view, when in fact, young people comprise a large segment of those whose life experiences are as intense and often as traumatic as those of adults in crisis. It is for this reason that the journal as a non-fictive mode of expression has re-emerged as a viable literary form both in and out of the classroom. James McConkey's Court of Memory (E.P. Dutton, 1983) is an astute example of this discovery and exploration of the personal writing life, and indeed, compels us to follow that exciting road to self-discovery on the pages of our own thoughts.

That wonderfully tantalizing challenge may not however, seem so tantalizing to those of us who often begin to quake at the mere thought of taking pen in hand. Dispelling some myths then, is the key to unlocking the creative written process that too often lies dormant in us all, until change sparks awareness.

That quiet creative energy hovering just below the surface is what touches and transforms those psychological 'hot-spots' deep inside, with language that targets thought. Simply by developing an 'inner eye', a sensitivity to language and rhythm,a stylistic voice, and a relentless resistance to self-sabotaging censorship, any one of us can discover the right words to put shape to feeling and scale those inner walls that lock us into silence.

The journal (as a non-historical record) has been around for quite some time, its earliest origins dating back to 10th century Japan. Women of the Japanese royal court developed the journal into a mode of personal expression exploring not only topical realities of the day but fascinating subjective views of fantasy. The more familiar names of Carl Jung, Ira Progoff, and Anais Nin (The New Diary by Tristine Rainer, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978) conceptualized the contemporary principles of the journal by ascribing valid literary and therapeutic value to the journal form as it exists today.

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One need only to rummage through Grandma's old attic letters to substantiate the value in our lives of words through time. This synchronicity weaves past to present, affording us a personal as well as historical legacy.

Developing a personal 'voice', an authentic, self-identifiable sound and rhythm on the written page, is the writer/student's first and (surprisingly) most accessible goal. Listening to the cadence of words as they are strung together by masters of non-fiction, and appreciating the resonance which fine-tunes each sentence, are fundamental steps in developing one's own inner ear. Developing a voice has less to do with rules of grammar and punctuation than the actual feeling of sound and syllable. Whatever moves you to feel, whatever makes the words on the page penetrate and stick, is what voice is. When we simplify our emotional responses as children do, and rid ourselves of the mental restrictions that impede us, our real voice emerges, and its recognition is startling.

In One Writer's Beginnings (Harvard University Press, 1984) writer Eudora Welty reveals that "there has never been a line read that I didn't hear. It is to me the voice of the story or the poem itself. The cadence, whatever it is that asks you to believe, the feeling that resides in the printed word, reaches me through the reader voice. I have supposed, but never found out, that this is the case with all readers - to read as listeners - and with all writers, to write as listeners."

Reading for the sheer enjoyment of sound creates a whole new environment for the appreciation of non-fiction. By unconsciously filling us with this sense of word cadence, we appreciate not only the experience and drama of the events as they unfold, but ingest little by little that which makes us better writers of our own experiences.

By developing the simple strategies that follow, journal writers (and readers) can learn to hear and see with new vision and to create a new consciousness on the page. The beauty of keeping a journal rests in its freedom to explore without limitation, convention, or censorship. Anyone can keep a journal; for the young person, it is an opportunity to create a legacy, forge an idea, cultivate an appreciation for nonfiction. The possibilities for personal growth are as astounding as the revelations released by the steady tuning of words. Combine this with the careful observation of the masters of the mode, and you embark on an adventure in real life rivaling the best fiction. How does the adventure begin?

It begins with a list - of course! Lists can enumerate priorities, goals, sense impressions, intuitions. They are random thoughts without sentences. Lists are indispensable when you become overwhelmed by the magnitude of a problem or situation resisting description, and although nothing may be resolved, the list can place events in proper perspective, focus them, and often in themselves, suggest solutions.

Portraits on the other hand, are detailed descriptions. By reading or writing a portrait you begin to learn about the qualities you observe and value in others, and it is a description that is never really completed. This mobile quality makes the portrait a useful instrument to observe the process of an evolving personality whether your own or another's. Writing a portrait of a parent, sibling, or friend is particularly valuable in understanding them as separate and unique individuals.

Clustering (Writing the Natural Way, by Gabriele Lusser Rico, Houghton Mifflin, 1983) is the technique which provides the most fun as well as the most provocative results. A classic tool to break writer's block, it is both an exercise and a spontaneous reflective process. Clustering emerges from the subconscious right hemisphere of the brain: our symbolic, creative, non-linear, imaging side. It begins with a critical "nucleus" word or phrase placed at the center of the page and circled. From it radiates a spontaneous and related flow of word connections which emerge rapidly and in any direction from the center. You then connect each new word with a line from a preceding circled word, or when a new image pops to mind, begin again at the center. The sense of randomness produces a relaxed flow that may not appear to make much sense at first. But by trusting this natural process, a pattern gradually appears and you then begin to make the transition to written sentences from the cluster pattern. The revelations are, to say the least, fascinating.

If you enjoy daydreaming, you need not feel guilty any longer. Daydreaming (or guided imagery) also taps the right side of the brain and resembles a movie screen in your mind on which you record the whimsical, imaginative, potential, or creative. By relaxing and eliminating any conscious controls, you concentrate on nurturing a comfortable ideal environment. By setting into motion various elements of landscape, chance meetings, journeys, etc., the daydream becomes an excellent personal reflective writing tool. Its possibilities and outcomes are both provocative and limitless.

Through the vividness of the dream comes shape through the poetic form (but not the kind Robert Browning had in mind). Unrhymed lines, lists, phrases, lyrical metaphors, symmetrical line rhythms, are all gifts from the inner resources of the mind which emerge in our most sensitive moments. As a journal device, nothing targets those emotional 'hot-spots' quite as accurately as a precisely placed metaphor that has materialized from a daydream or cluster. There are no grammatical rules governing this kind of poetry - only intuitive rules of sound and sense.

Automatic writing (free intuitive writing, stream of consciousness writing) has been a standard of journal writing for quite some time. Like clustering, it emerges spontaneously. Since we are often cluttered by daily topical occurrances, automatic writing is an excellent method for getting in touch with our inner needs.

You simply wait for whatever surfaces in your mind, write it as you think it, as quickly as possible, regardless of whether or not it makes sense. What eventually materializes from apparent nonsense is an authentic, original narrative, revealing an, until then, obscured focus. It is a captivating if not magical, writing game.

Letters of all kinds are a surprising resource for journal readers and writers. Because letter writing has suffered a premature post-mortem, their historical and literary values were swept aside (or hidden in the attic). Like automatic writing, letter writing asa journal strategy has re-emerged as an interesting and vibrant literary form. *Domestick Beings* (June Sprigg) and *Among Friends* (M.F.K. Fisher) reveal the resurgence in diary letters as historical (as well as domestic) guideposts. Letters of the more common variety are especially valuable as a cathartic release for those of us who experience difficulty in relating to those too emotionally close to us. By studying our responses in unsent letters of the journal, we are often better able to maintain objectivity in situations too volatile or private to reveal openly to others.

The *dialogue* is perhaps the most revealing and emotionally explosive journalistic device, one which must be used with care. The dialogue is a conversation you carry on with yourself or some critical aspect of a problem, event, or part of your own body. The intriguing aspect of the dialogue is that it can be undertaken with familiar people, inanimate objects, historical figures, aspects of personality, or any one of a limitless number of prospects that reveal a remarkable clarity. In the dialogue you simply call on the subject and allow it to respond to you spontaneously. The following excerpt illustrates this powerful instrument:

Me: Are you there?
Anger: Oh yes, I am here.
Me: Why do you consume me?
Anger: Because I am unresolved - and as long as I remain so, I will grow and consume you.
Me: You're like my nightmare. I screamed and clawed like an animal but could not kill you. You came on me more belligerently than before. You hide inside me like a thief and steal away my strength, rob me of my hope; you fill me with your hideous guilt.
Anger: I am what you have made me. I give you what you expect.
Me: I expect nothing. I hope nothing. I grieve.
Anger: Until you no longer grieve, I will be with you.
Me: Why? Why won't you leave me in peace?
Anger: Because you have not resolved the difficulty. You know this, but you continually avoid it.
Me: But there are no answers. I am trapped. I believe what I believe. I cannot give you everything. I would disappear.
Anger: I am not asking you for anything, you fool! I do not want your strength or your foolish pride. I want you to face

life! Face it squarely, without self-pity or remorse! What is gone is gone. Stop groveling and live. Live!
Me: Will you always be with me?
Anger: Less and less with time.
Me: I am afraid you will destroy me.
Anger: Only you can allow that to occur. I can be a constructive impetus in your life if you learn to channel me.
Me: I am so tired.
Anger: So am I.

- From: LIFELINES by
Susan Cavallari
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There is great mystery and revelation in our active inner lives. To exercise the means by which we travel these inner landscapes is simply to make use of the skills and intuitive responses we already possess. The journal is both an outlet and an environment for these skills; a 'hot-spot' of visionary activity; a creative workbook of the soul. Its receptacle is the sum of our collective human experience and its boundaries of exploration are limitless. We, after all, are the most challenging frontier.

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How Do You Spell "Nonfiction"?

Suanne Huffman

It never fails. Every February I cheerfully deliver the proclamation that our next unit will be nonfiction, and I'm greeted by muffled yawns. For many students real life spells "b-o-r-i-n-g." Well, why not? In a child's world ruled by gremlins, video arcades and Indiana Jones, reality seems hopelessly ho-hum.

There seemed to be no way to avoid it. It was like pulling teeth to get anyone to read nonfiction, let alone enjoy it. Being one who likes to share guilt, I found solace in pointing my finger at the antiquated selections in our class anthology. The unison reaction of "but we read that in the fifth grade" usually greeted my efforts to teach yet another version of Helen Keller, Anne Frank or Booker T. Washington. Now, don't get me wrong. I think these people were truly inspirational, but so are some of our more contemporary heroes. Thus evolved a preference for using the newspaper and magazines for the core of nonfiction reading. The short, timely articles give students a chance to experiment with different modes of writing while exploring their own values.

When we recently revised our ninth grade curriculum, we compiled ideas and materials which we use in a nonfiction unit of approximately six weeks long. The following list highlights several of our favorites:

1. Journal-writing: Encourage students to explore their lives through writing by using a technique called "fastwrite." Students should be given five-ten minutes of class time to write without undue concern for mechanics on a topic of interest to them. The trick is to write continuously for that period of time and to keep their pencils moving even if they have to resort to "I don't know what to write." This forces a natural voice to emerge as well as thoughts and emotions often surpressed. Of course, the classic lament is "But what do I write about?" Don't give in to this, but rather encourage students to come up with their own topics. Some ideas for topic selection that usually work are brainstorming and a Time Capsule.

   a. Brainstorming: Ask students to write down 10 topics they could write about. Allow a very short period of time (2 minutes) to encourage fluidity of ideas. Then ask students to pair up and compile a list of 20 topics. Again, only allow 2 minutes and encourage piggy-backing off partner's list. Now form groups of four and go for 40 topics (5 minutes). They will feel hurried and complain, but more good topics come from limiting the time. Have students return to their seats and go around the room asking each student to tell the class his/her favorite. If others hear topics they

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like, they should add them ending with a minimum of 50. Save this list and use for in-class fastwrites.

b. Time Capsule: These are open-ended statements of any type, but the following examples work quite well:

1. The most important person in my life is...
2. Ten years from now I hope...
3. The worst thing to happen to me was...
4. Happiness is...
5. I worry about...
6. My best memory is...
7. I get angry when...
8. Before I die, I hope...

Students should keep these to use for fastwrites. Confidentially should be maintained as these can be sensitive topics.

2. Business letters: Bring materials to class from the guidance center such as The Occupational Outlooks Handbook, Barron's Guide to American Colleges and Universities, and any other career or post-high school guides. Students write to addresses for information. (A review of correct business letter format may be needed.) Anyone who brings materials received in the mail can be given extra credit. Also, the materials are passed around the room to get maximum exposure. Another interesting option is to get addresses of foreign embassies and tourist bureaus from travel agencies. Students often get an assortment of colorful brochures on the countries.

3. Read "Helene Tucker," an excerpt from Dick Gregory's autobiography entitled Nigger. This emotional account of a small boy's confrontation with humiliation in the classroom at the hands of an insensitive teacher really sparks discussion. Ask students to write about a person who made a difference (good or bad) in their lives.

4. Read "Steichen: Dissatisfied Genius," or the book "The Weapons of Gordon Parks" (a classroom film is available also) concerning people who have found success in the non-verbal art of photography. Pass around photos from Steichen's book The Family of Man or other sources of thought-provoking photojournalism. Students pick one to write about.

5. Read Robert Frost's poem "The Road Not Taken" aloud in class. After discussion, students write about a road they did or did not take, reflecting on the decision and its ramifications on their lives.

6. Choose several personality profiles from the newspaper or the textbook. After reading, discuss effective interview strategies as well as possible questions to ask someone. Each student interviews a friend, family member or other significant person. Bring this information to class and hold a writer's workshop giving

students an opportunity to revise and produce a finished personality profile. Encourage them to discover a slant and develop it rather than a random "hit 'n' miss" paper. Feature writers from the local newspaper are usually helpful with this type of writing.

7. Contact your local newspaper and ask them to save you wire service photos. Pass them around the class and ask students to pick several photos that interest them. Get into small groups and brainstorm topics that the photos bring to mind. (Example: one which showed a photo of a shark inspired such topics as shark attacks, whaling industry, deep sea fishing, the Titanic,...) Each student compiles a list of ideas and then narrows it to one he/she wishes to research more thoroughly. This can be developed into a "Search" paper and is usually of more interest to the student than choosing from a list created by the teacher.

8. Using a column which appears periodically in "Dear Abby" called "People of Inspiration," have students pick one of these people who have overcome handicaps to achieve success. Or think of someone not on the list who should be. Research and write about this person. Also consider why you chose this person.

9. Paraphrasing: Hand out copies of "Desiderata" to class. Assign each student a line to paraphrase. The next day go around the room asking each student to explain one line and use for a class discussion. Ask students to write their own "Desiderata," or advice on how to live a meaningful life. They may also want to choose the one quality they consider the most essential to a happy life.

10. Summaries and Vocabulary Enrichment: Each week students find one article from the newspaper which interests them. Cut it out, underline all the words whose definitions are unknown to them, using a dictionary, define, summarize the article and turn in. The teacher chooses one article each week, makes a copy or a transparency, reads for class discussion and uses vocabulary.

11. Using the classic line from Romeo and Juliet "What's in a name?" find names of famous people who have added to our vocabulary. Assign each student one name to research. Then find the word in the dictionary the name has inspired. Present to the class. Some of the possibilities are: A.M. Ampere, Vulcanus, E. de Silhouette, Louis Pasteur, F.A. Mesmer, Bacchus, Earl of Sandwich, Plato, John Duns Scotus, Luigi Galvani, Hercules, Hermes, Julius Caesar, Louis Braille, John Cheese (slang for "Yankees"), H. Shrapnel, Hector, T. Bowdler, King Mausolus, Narcissus, Sir Robert Peel, Captain Boycott, J.I. Guillotin, Echo, and Amelia Bloomer. This is good for vocabulary enrichment as well as biographical data.

Making Connections: Fiction and Nonfiction

Patricia Phelan

Education is a process in which we help students make connections between something they know and something new. Teachers in elementary school naturally provide such experiences for youngsters; by secondary school these same young people find their learning compartmentalized into separate subjects and periods. As English teachers we can experience the joy of watching students come alive as they make connections between their current experience, an idea found in literature, and new facts abounding in the "real" scientific world.

The worlds of fiction and nonfiction appear closer than students might think at first. Fiction presents characters in an imaginary setting and situation in novel, short story, poetry, humor, drama. Through vicariously experiencing their struggles we experience images and emotions which lead to insights about ourselves and the world. Nonfiction presents people in a real setting and situation in essay, description, cartoon, television, the "new journalism", scientific writing. Through understanding their actions and decisions we experience images and emotions which lead to understanding and knowledge about ourselves and the world. I believe that nonfiction is a rich source for enlivening the study of fiction. More than this, some current nonfiction writers' style blends the beauty of prose found in great literature with the clarity of explanation found in scientific writing. In addition, while nonfiction traditionally seems to be more "real" and "true" than fiction, it may just be that insight is the same in either writing; definitions of truth and reality are slippery at best.

Writing is done by a person. Students come alive to a work when you offer your own enthusiasm and information about the writer which they did not know. It is no accident that so many textbooks provide biographical details about writers, showing readers what the real person behind the writing is like. Some current nonfiction which provides insight into the writer, beauty of style, and depth of factual information includes works by Joan Didion, Norman Cousins, Loren Eisley, and Lewis Thomas. Joan Didion's scrutiny of people in a situation in a place is remarkable for her insights and her beauty of expression, as in Slouching Towards Bethlehem. Norman Cousin's Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient: Reflections on Healing and Regeneration offers an inside look at how it feels to be deathly

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ill and what it is like to take charge of your healing process. Loren Eisley's Immense Journey links man with his universe in prose approaching poetry for its depth and beauty. Lewis Thomas looks into the opposite, a microscopic world, which sends him to philosophy and theology in The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher. These nonfiction works are especially exciting because of their revelation of the writer as well as their beauty of expression. A good source of new titles is found in teachers from other departments with whom you eat lunch. Ask them what they have enjoyed reading lately. What have you been reading? What new ideas have excited you this past year? How do these relate to the world of fiction and nonfiction as you study these in the classroom?

Here are some obvious examples, connections that can be made between fiction reading and nonfiction. Orwell's 1984 leads to discussion of mind control, semantics, doublespeak, visions of the future, Orwell's experiences and essays. Thought control leads to discussions about book burning, which could turn to current groups who practice censorship or historical examples like Miller's Crucible, Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter or Bradbury's Farenheit 451. Tolstoy's Death of Ivan Illytch invites thinking about death of the terminally ill, reminding us of current examples of "mercy" killing and Kubler-Ross' On Death and Dying. Starting with fiction or with history, students enjoy the individual integrity of a Don Quixote or a Cyrano de Bergerac, recognizing these courageous men as lonely as they often feel themselves.

Any daily newspaper recalls historical parallels with dilemma situations presented in the earliest literature of the world, from Gilgamesh, Beowulf and world mythologies to our day. A dilemma tale is one of the oldest teaching tools we have used with each other to instruct the young and explore possibilities. A knowlege of law, government, sociology, computer science enriches the reading of current fiction and viewing of motion pictures. How-to-do-it books invite students to write their own versions, explaining processes and skills with which they are familiar.

What strategies can provide your secondary students with an opportunity to make connections between fiction and nonfiction? First, students themselves are a collection of experts in the room. It is always a fresh surprise for me to find out how much they know in a variety of fields about which I am ignorant. Ask them what they know. Share literature-related ideas from science, history, sociology, math, foreign language classes. As teachers, we do not take all of these classes, but our students do. Use nonfiction sources to tie daily information with fiction you have been reading or plan to read--newspaper articles that relate directly, television shows airing this week, magazines with a theme keyed to what you are reading. There is no easy way to anticipate current nonfiction support for your classroom unit, but you and the students can be alert for the connections. When all of you are watching together, the sources come alive.

In additon to students as experts and seekers, *you* have much more knowledge and expertise than you usually share in class. Perhaps the expertise is not directly related to English, so you feel uneasy about sharing. Stories and poems often touch other areas of our lives through setting, character or conflict of a type that you will understand well. Share what you know.

Make nonfiction materials available in the classroom as this suits your emphasis. A set of newspapers or just newspaper front pages is useful to work with vocabulary, connotation, doublespeak, character description, setting, conflict. The news stories can be capsule situations from which students write fiction or nonfiction, short story or essay. A set of magazines, different issues or types, forms a textbook to investigate such things as writing style, advertising and persuasive language, a cultural capsule of values, prototypes of characters and situations for discussion or fiction writing.

As students make connections between fiction and nonfiction, between something they know and something new, they expand their understanding. Hopefully this habit of making connections will follow them beyond our classroom to the world in which, as adults, they are forced to find new solutions to the new problems which will face them.

> It is a violence from within that protects us from a violence without. It is the imagination pressing back against the pressure of reality. It seems, in the last analysis, to have something to do with our self-preservation; and that, no doubt, is why the expression of it, the sound of its words, helps us to live our lives.
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> Wallace Stevens, "The Nobel Rider and the Sound of Words," in *The Necessary Angel*.

The Unexamined Life

Linda Helfand
Consultant: Eve Soumerai

Teachers are often the prey of the unexamined life. Their time is devoured by the conscientious attempt to fulfill the requirements of the curriculum, the administration and the community. As a result, though students may have acquired the skill to dissect a novel or turn a phrase at the end of forty weeks, there is often a sense of dissatisfaction because some essential element in the process of educating the whole child has been sacrificed. After all, is the measure of a young person the score on an SAT examination? It is understandable that when teachers are so harassed by the pressures of producing a measurably intelligent individual, they cannot be further overwhelmed by such considerations as human rights or humanities education. It is almost unfair to make such a demand and, yet, such a demand must be made.

In the final analysis, we are different from our technology, and the factor which underscores this difference is our humanity. Descartes did not sum up the essence of a human being in his well-turned phrase, "Cogito ergo sum." Yes, our humanity is partially defined by the fact that we think, but it also encompasses another truth--we feel. We have an emotional depth which can overpower the rationality of even the most intelligent individual. History has confirmed this phenomenon on countless occasions. Therefore, if we do not address this essential component, we are simply sanctioning the production of endless thinking machines who may score quite nicely on the College Boards right before they inflict untold harm on their fellow human beings.

Teachers of English try to compromise with this seeming dichotomy on the role of education by assuming that in the study of the 'great books' the humanistic themes will automatically emerge. They believe, oftentimes, that students will make that intuitive leap between the search for self-knowledge undertaken by Oedipus, or Marlow, or Stephen Dedalus and their own lives. After all, these are the classics whose universal themes are the keys which unlock the mysteries of life. A simple yet earnest discussion of Marlow's descent into his own heart of darkness will throw a sort of light on all our lives and we will emerge from the classroom more 'in touch' with our feelings. We will know what we are and are not capable of doing the next time we book our passage on a cruise ship down the Congro River. In the meantime, we have also neatly fulfilled the curriculum requirements and, thus, the best of all possible worlds has been achieved.

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This approach to educating the whole child, unfortunately, is simply a band-aid. If a teacher recognizes the need for addressing the 'human' side of his or her students, then time must be purposely devoted specifically with that goal in mind. However, it can be approached in a way that does incorporate a variety of skills which are a part of most English curricula.

In this regard, as part of a special in-service series of workshops, a ten week program was devised and introduced at Conard High School in West Hartford, Connecticut, to two classes of tenth grade students. This program offers a wide spectrum of possibilities in literature, writing and related language arts skills. It may also be introduced in an interdisciplinary curriculum depending upon reading content. The unit was entitled "Choices" and its overriding objective was to introduce students to actual historical figures who made important moral choices based on their values. Students used their examination of these figures to explore their own scale of values and to think more clearly about the importance of choice in everyone's life.

The introduction to the unit involved a pre-inventory survey where students were asked to respond to three individual categories: first, a series of hypothetical situations ranging from personal to moral issues; second, ranking ten 'value' concepts such as security, popularity and humanitarianism, and, third, defining their personal ideas about the terms 'hero' and 'morality.' The answers they gave were discussed in general terms throughout the unit.

We then began the content of the program. This consisted of reading three biographies, two of a dramatic 'literary' nature, Galileo by Bertoit Brecht and A Man for All Seasons by Robert Bolt, and one historical work, The Righteous Gentile by John Bierman concerning the life of Raoul Wallenberg. In addition to studying these works from a literary and historical standpoint, students developed research techniques by writing brief thesis biographies of both More and Galileo and a more extensive research biography on one figure important directly or indirectly to one of these two men's lives. This last assignment was presented to the class in the form of an abstract. Writing skills were incorporated in two papers, one a "Meeting of the Minds" dramatic script resurrecting More, Galileo and the subject of their other research oral report; and the other, a comparison/contrast paper based on Wallenberg and the subject of an open choice biography the students were required to read outside class.

The Wallenberg section of the unit was particularly successful and memorable. Most students were generally unfamiliar with this remarkable hero of World War II and very few had been introduced to an in-depth view of either the Holocaust or human rights education. Extensive background was provided through films, tapes, and guest lecturers to make this nonfiction biography more meaningful. Nonfiction is an important element in the English curriculum, but, unfortunately, is is too often neglected.

Heated discussion was generated in this unit as students became actively involved in the issue of choices based on values. They were able to apply related issues of the Holocaust and other instances of oppression to their own society, and in this way they began to recognize the need for individual thought and action based on conscience. Indeed, they were so enraged by Bierman's excellent account of the mysterious disappearance of Wallenberg somewhere in the Gulag Archipelago that they were inspired to write letters to our representatives in Washington and to the Kremlin demanding action (we actually did get a few non-committal responses). They saw, finally, the importance of acting on one's beliefs rather than being a passive spectator.

At the end of the program, they were given a post-unit survey in a slightly different form than the pre-survey. The results were quite enlightening. Obviously, it would be naive to expect startling changes in a ten week period. The bulk of the responses did have one common theme, though. Most of the students (approximately 85%) believed there was a definite need for this type of education in the curriculum and most felt that it did make them think about the importance of acting on their own personal values.

Since it is not the teacher's responsibility to instill his or her personal beliefs, it must be left up to the students to hammer away at each other to foster a greater awareness of what is meant by morality. The teacher is not there to dictate values. If this is attempted, the purpose of the unit is lost. When certain views were expressed that seemed repugnant (eg. Hitler was simply a misunderstood genius), the classroom discussion became the vehicle to examine these ideas, not a teacher's lecture.

There were many modifications and possibilities which the pilot program suggested. First, one of the primary values of this unit is that it can be tailored to meet the needs of any class. For example, the tenth graders who were involved in the pilot program were identified as above average students and had little difficulty comprehending the literature. For average or modified ability students, different titles could be selected to meet their particular needs. In addition, the sophomore program at Conard High School was recently revised so that the reading strand emphasizes world literature. Because the two plays were already on hand, these were selected for the curriculum. Special funding was received to purchase the Wallenberg books.

Second, two obvious assets would be to include a female historical figure (eg. Shaw's Saint Joan) and a more contemporary person (which the students recommended). Also, by using nonfiction in part, students commented that they often could identify more closely with the characters involved since it is more direct to begin with the literal truth of a situation. Indeed, the post-survey results clearly indicated that they preferred the factual historical biographies to the literary ones. Third, besides the literature, the other skills in the areas of writing, research, discussion and oral presentation could be enhanced or modified depending upon the needs of the classes. Its interdisciplinary benefits, especially in social studies and science, are evident.

How much time should be allowed for this type of education depends on how important it is to the individual teacher. If latitude is allowed in what is taught as far as titles and content, then the only determining factor is whether or not one feels that humanistic and human rights issues are important for a student to confront; however, if these issues are not raised at some time in a person's life, then the entire educational system cannot deny a certain degree of responsibility for the course of events which occur in a social system. It is education which is the common denominator, and when evil triumphs because enough good men did nothing, we must look to ourselves as one of the sources for such a catastrophe.

> We know not what may be the nature of that eternal punishment to which those will be doomed who shall be judged to have been evil at the last; but methinks that no more terrible torment can be devised than the memory of self-imposed ruin. What wretchedness can exceed that of remembering from day to day that the race has been all run, and has been altogether lost; that the last chance has gone, and has gone in vain; that the end has come, and with it disgrace, contempt, and self-scorn--disgrace that never can be redeemed, contempt that never can be removed, and self-scorn that will eat into one's vitals for ever?
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> Anthony Trollope, Framley Parsonage

A Nonfiction Unit That Costs Less Than It Comes To

Margaret Queenan

Nonfiction? Not to teach how to find information and form opinions from the matter on its pages would be a disservice to students who must either be informed or be at a disadvantage for the rest of their lives. We know that the same student who struggles through Developmental English can read and find meaning in a complicated car manual, so interest and motivation must be key. There are many ways to develop both. Here is one that works for me:

I let students choose a career that interests them then have them brainstorm everything they'd like to know about the career. Recorders write the students' responses on the board. Even though the careers are varied, the questions are parallel.

After the thoughts slow, the students channel their queries into categories, like "Advantages of the Career," "Disadvantages," "Preparation," "Special Requirements," "Future," "Daily Activities." The students then choose the areas that intrigue them. Then they're ready to read--but first they have to find a book.

To secure the right book for the right student, I ask for help from the school and local libraries. And after once receiving one hundred research papers at a time, I now heed the librarians' advice to limit, because of a shortage of books, the assignment to one group at a time. I resist the impulse to "help" the students by gathering all the books in one place. Instead, I let the students struggle with the mystique of translating my card catalog lecture and demonstration into the act of finding for themselves that the chosen or a related career is indeed listed in the subject catalog; that the subject card does give call number, author, and title, just as I promised that it would; and that the students can in fact track down a book for themselves. (I recently rediscovered the need to let the students "learn to do by doing" when an eighteen year old I know had to ask a twelve year old friend to go to the library with him to help him locate a book.)

This may seem like a long prologue to a nonfiction assignment, and it is; but so it will be for the students. Unless we provide them with books, as we often do for fiction assignments, or unless they can twirl paperback displays seeking appealing titles, then the finding of the book will become a large part of the process of reading the nonfiction book. I always allot a few in-library days to help. The lucky, or astute, few who find a book right away assist me in coaching the others through the mysteries (and for many students they are mysteries) of the library. Then I let the other shoe(s) drop:

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More than one book is required so that the students can gain a balanced view. Each student should read a biography or autobiography of a person involved in the career. Here is a true test of the ability to glean meaning from nonfiction. A standard "career" book lists the advantages, disadvantages, preparation, requirements, future, and daily activities of a career, but the student has to infer these from a biography. The benefits of reading a biography are more than the acquiring of inferencing skills, however. There is no better way to learn about the human joys, fears, exasperations, and exhilarations that accompany the day-in-day-out life of a career--unless I ask (and because of the friendships that develop and the insights that are gained, I always ask) the students to interview people involved in "their" career.

The students must also read magazine articles about the career or about people involved in the career. Information in a book can be more thorough but not more current than that in a periodical. There is the added advantage that the students gain familiarity with The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, the National Geographic Index, the New York Times Index, Current Biography, Who's Who in America, and the International Who's Who.

What, besides informed students who know what careers they might or would-not-under-any-circumstances be interested in, are the products of the students' reading?

Once, seventh graders made three-dimensional presentations, accompanied by four pages of information-sharing. Grocery-box peepholes showed lawyers speaking to juries. (The fact that juries have twelve members and the students would have to design twelve jurors was an "aha" experience for some.) Shoebox operating rooms displayed veterinarians' diplomas. (The students had learned how few colleges prepare students to become veterinarians and that a diploma from such a school means that a student has been in the top of his high school class and has persisted diligently throughout college.)

One year, eighth grade students gave five minute speeches using large posters to help explain the advantages and disadvantages of "their" careers, The required sentence outlines were later tacked to the posters and displayed for others to read leisurely. Only one student opted for the alternate assignment to bring in and interview a person actively employed in the career he had read about. The student invited his uncle, a plumber. His visual aid was an array of pipes and tools; and the plumber, by convincing the girls that plumbing is highly paid, intricate, and as possible for them as for him, amended some already-fixed stereotypes.

In other years, seventh, eighth and eleventh graders wrote research papers and donated them to library vertical files.

I always follow this month-long immersion into the nonfiction world of salaries, working conditions, and educational preparation by handing out passages taken from another nonfiction world, Walden and "Life Without Principle." The students and I discuss the ways in which we are affected by Thoreau's lamentation, "--Business! I think that there is nothing, not even crime, more opposed to poetry, to philosophy, ay, to life itself, than this incessant business;" or, "To have done anything by which you earned money merely is to have been truly idle or worse. If the laborer gets no more than the wages which his employer pays him, he is cheated, he cheats himself," or, "It is remarkable that there is little or nothing to be remembered written on the subject of getting a living; how to make getting a living not merely honest and honorable, but altogether inviting and glorious; for if getting a living is not so, then living is not."[1] We ponder how Thoreau's exhortation, "Simplify! Simplify! Simplify!" applies to the careers we have explored. We wonder if we'll ever be called on to sacrifice for a higher principle or if we'll suck out all the marrow of life and if it's mean to "get the whole and genuine meanness of it" so that we won't come to the end of our lives and find that we haven't lived.[2]

Last year, enervated from a "Teaching Reading Comprehension" course, I asked each student to read the biography or autobiography of a person s/he admired, a person not involved in the career the student had investigated. The student had to take large cut-out coins and write how the person "spent" his life. Did he serve in the military? Study for a doctorate? Raise a family? Lead a nation? On the other side of the coin, the student had to write what the person received for the expenditure of years, effort, money. Did she have a family life? Were her poems published? Did she achieve freedom for her people? Was she assassinated? The students were asked to star those items they would like to attain and to mark with an "x" those results they wouldn't want at any cost. Each student was then asked to assess the person's life in terms of what was spent and what was gained. In the words of Thoreau, did it "cost more than it came to"?[3]

This unit "costs" more than a month's time but the students gain:

* Ease in using the card catalog, Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, National Geographic Index, and the New York Times Index
* Knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages of a career
* Experience in reading, for specific information, lengthy nonfiction books
* Familiarity with as many careers as there are interests among students in the room
* Vicarious advice from people already involved in a career
* The unmatchable experience of considering with Thoreau the ways to spend one's life
* The ability to analyze the successes of a person and to tally the costs

One such cost was discovered by a gifted seventh grader: She would be 31 years old when she finally finished training to be a psychiatrist. Did she give up? She convinced her parents, teachers, guidance counselor, and principal to allow her to shorten the process by skipping the eighth grade.

This unit is filled with successes, now as the students find and read nonfiction and later when those skills and their knowledge of careers help them make the large and small decisions of the rest of their lives. This unit comes to a great deal more than it costs.

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In these days we are becoming very strict about truth with our children; terribly strict occasionally, when we consider the natural weakness of the moral courage at the ages of ten, twelve, and fourteen. But I do not know that we are at all increasing the measure of strictness with which we, grown-up people, regulate our own truth and falsehood.

Anthony Trollope, The Last Chronicle of Barset

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[1] Henry David Thoreau, "Life Without Principle," The Portable Thoreau, Revised Edition, 1947; rpt. (New York: Penguin Books, 1977),pp. 632-634.

[2] Henry David Thoreau, Walden, "Where I Lived and What I Lived For," (New York: New American Library), p. 66.

[3] Ibid., ("Higher Laws"), p. 143.

Generating Nonfiction: Writing Across the Curriculum

Tony Magistrale

In the past year the University of Vermont English Department conducted a series of two-day writing across the curriculum workshops for faculty members representing the diverse university disciplines. The two elements shared by the workshop group were a desire to improve the writing skills of students across the curriculum and a general confusion regarding concrete approaches available to bringing this about. In this essay I would like to share some of the results from the workshops in which I have participated and co-directed.[1]

For the last two decades, or at least since the contemporary emphasis on composition programs in English departments and the plethora of attendant rhetorical strategies for improving student prose, educators have affixed responsibility for poor writing skills on a variety of culprits: television, computers, telephones, teachers who don't know how to write themselves, a general failure to address adequately the mechanics of grammar and spelling, fewer opportunities for writing exercises. The list goes as long as the complaint, and we have still achieved little by way of definite solutions. Our students don't seem to be writing any better (an observation shared by most of the individuals at our workshops), and as a likely correlation, they don't seem to find the activity of writing very meaningful or pleasurable.

These were some of the reasons for our decision to offer a series of writing across the curriculum workshops. If the faculty shared a similar attitude toward student prose--both in terms of its importance to the learning process and its current state of decline--a broader based commitment to student writing, extending beyond the English department, would at least provide more frequent occasions for student practice. What we discovered, however, is that the _amount_ of undergraduate writing generated at the University of Vermont is not the problem; if the hundred faculty members participating in our three workshops are a fair representation of the university as a whole, students are receiving the opportunity to write in nearly every one of their classes. The issue of improved writing skills is therefore not necessarily related to the frequency of student writing, but rather to the _kind_ of writing they are asked to produce.

We began each workshop by asking the participants several questions regarding the type of student writing required in their courses and the reasons why writing is included in a sociology or

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mathmatics classroom. The answers we received to these questions were similar to the responses compiled by James Britton in surveys of writing in English high schools.[2] Most of our colleagues use student writing for two purposes: to evaluate and to impart knowledge. Relying upon Britton's earlier research for classifying writing according to the function it serves and its intended audience, the majority of teachers in our workshop--especially those representing the sciences and social sciences--required writing in their classrooms for informational purposes exclusively. The students were required to take notes on lectures, record data for written reports, answer multiple choice examinations, and compose end of the term research models in final draft form. Furthermore, the intended audience for this material was always the professor. When students in the classes performed composing exercises, they were seldom in multiple draft form, and usually took place outside of the classroom--in the isolation of the dorm room, laboratory, or library. As a result, most of the undergraduates at the University of Vermont follow writing patterns nearly identical to those Arthur Applebee[3] found in American high schools. Writing is a self-contained activity that does not include personal or imaginative reconstruction of experience, as in journals, diaries, letters, or personal responses, where the purpose for writing is to engage discovery and direct involvement on the writer's part with new material. Moreover, students were asked to supply the professor with examples of research models from the discipline: those in biochemistry were expected to write like biochemists, those enrolled in sociology classes, like professional sociologists. A student majoring in the discipline might very well desire to practice writing in the persona of his future profession, but obviously the majority of undergraduates who enroll in biochemistry or sociology courses do not intend to major in the field. Moreover, in the process of teaching students to write in the idiom of specialized disciplines, we are abetting the kind of cross-curriculum schizophrenia. Most of my colleagues are discouraged when individual students ask questions similar to "How do you want me to write this assignment?" or "What style of writing do you want me to use?" And yet these are the responses educators necessarily generate when they limit their students to traditional academic prose models. By restricting the types of writing available within the university curricula students are encouraged to produce language which either reflects a general apathy toward the spirit of critical inquiry or a flat "voiceless" style characteristic of a writer lacking any kind of commitment to the assignment. After all, what other kind of writing is possible when the student is forced by virtue of grade pressure to utilize a writing persona that is highly impersonal and sounds identical to the other members of the class?

As evidenced in the assignment topics and accompanying examples of student writing which we requested from our colleagues prior to the workshop, the majority of teachers at the University of Vermont who include writing in their course offerings assign work which does not primarily involve direct student input. Most of the sample essay examination questions we received (prior to each workshop) did not ask undergraduates to pursue independent research or consider issues in which s/he might be interested; instead, the educators asked for answers to questions they already knew. From the history department: "Name and discuss the three major issues which led to the outbreak of World War II." From a forestry professor: "How serious is the problem of wildfire and what forest fire control measures are currently applied?" And from a teacher of engineering: "In a 3 to 5 page paper, explain the principle of jet propulsion."

Each of these assignments asks for specific information which is relevant to the course, but each likewise limits the student writer to a perception that there must exist definite answers to these questions; to be right, the student must compose a version of the answer his teacher already knows and wants to hear repeated. As a result of this procedure, the writer gains little sense of discovering anything new or different about the subject and sharing it with his audience. Recent research on writing has argued that more persuasive and interesting prose originates from writers who are "actively" involved with their material--composing about issues self-generated by the author himself--rather than "passively" engaged in transcribing lecture notes or some other author's reasoning into essay form.[4] If we as educators are truly committed to fostering critical and independent thinking in our students, we must re-evaluate the role writing occupies across the curriculum. If we want our students to acquire a command of the language so it becomes a force for persuasion and self-knowledge, rather than a mere tool for transcription and evaluation, we need assignments which ask them to become more personally involved in the process of writing. If it remains a plausible maxim that the best professional prose originates from authors writing about topics they know and care about, why do we forsake the maxim by asking out students to write always from a foreign perspective, as though they know and care about nothing?

In their essay "Learning to write in the Secondary Schools: How and Where," the Applebee research team cites as their first recommendation to improving the quality of writing in American high schools, the need "for more situations in which writing serves as a tool for learning, rather than as a means to display acquired knowledge.[5] My association with writing across the curriculum workshops has demonstrated the relevancy of this conclusion, and extends it beyond the elementary and high school levels to include college work as well. The Applebee research team presents a very broad outline to implementing a process-oriented methodology. On the second day of each workshop, we try to extend the Applebee analysis through the detailed recommendations and specific applications generated by individual participants of the workshop in group activity. The following suggestions represent the conclusions of the workshops with which I have been affiliated. We arrived at them inductively, and they are based on consensus opinion.

1. **Multiple Drafts.** In emphasizing the process over product approach to writing, the teacher receives a more accurate means of pupil development. Non-graded versions of written work help alleviate some of the traditional academic pressure that students feel

when they are forced to view the assignment as a "one shot" measure for evaluation. This strategy not only produces better "final" copies, but helps to cure mechanical skill problems as well. One immediate result of producing multiple drafts is to demystify the activity of composing; the class learns through experience that good writing is not simply the result of a spontaneous birth, but must evolve in stages. As my co-workshop leader Toby Fulwiler has argued, "students who learn to put writing through personal, exploratory stages before writing a final draft develop more thoughtful papers than students who attempt to compose finished wisdom in one sitting."[6] Moreover, many of the student revisions should be generated from peer group interaction, thus liberating the teacher to move among individual groups or concentrate on individual instruction.

2. **Journals.** Ask the class to use journal entries before and after reading assignments, for expressing reactions to class discussions and lectures, as a starting point for generating paper topics and research, and to record impressions of thoughts, feelings, moods and experiences. Begin and end each class with a five minute writing entry. Ask students to write on a focused theme related to class content (e.g. their own theories about why the institution of slavery evolved before beginning a lecture/discussion about racial relationships in contemporary America). This exercise helps to focus thinking directly on the subject and will often, if students are requested to read entries to the class, provide introductory discussion material.

3. **Prose Models.** Show models of effective student writing and contrast it with less effective prose. The instructor questions students into explaining why one example is the better of the two. Where is the writing at its strongest and weakest? The "model approach" to learning helps to define what constitutes good writing, while at the same time illustrating that style and content are inextricably related.

4. **Assignments.** Compose writing assignments which seek to raise questions, pose problems, and pursue areas of original research that the individual student is interested in exploring. One purpose of using writing in the classroom should be to emphasize student involvement by making learning personal. This is accomplished less effectively when the instructor assigns work designed to produce guided and unimaginative prose (e.g. canned research papers, recall-testing, note-taking and copying exercises). Before we can expect our students to create essays which are a pleasure to read, we must first create assignments which are a pleasure to write.

5. **Audience.** Nearly all writing performed in academic settings is composed with a single audience in mind: the teacher. Our students write on subjects we assign, and if they are at all motivated by grades and ego fulfillment, they usually rely upon a rigid and safe form of diction and language structuring gleaned from years of producing academic research papers. Attaining fluency in the language of academese may equip our students for survival in school, but it remains only a single voice in a world which will ask them to speak

in tongues. Providing writing exercises where class members are asked to write to friends, to themselves, to a classmate, and to an administrator or expert in the discipline, enlarges the student's range of dialogue; urging students to experiment with a plurality of prose styles for a variety of readers is a way of demonstrating the important choices available in using language and the appropriateness of establishing proper contexts for different writing voices.

6. **Collaboration.** A classroom environment fostering student discussion of current research and drafts of writing increases the acceptance of criticism and criticizing. In his book Telling Writing, Macrorie advocates frequent discussion among students to create a workshop atmosphere in the classroom. Responding orally to one another's work helps students to clarify and organize writing concepts; the act of reading one's own prose out loud helps to focus attention on language that does not sound appropriate.

7. **Composing Assignments.** Instructors working within the same or related subject areas should establish periodic meetings to discuss strategies and specific examples for advancing student writing within the field. This is one method for colleagues to share common experiences in the classroom, while at the same time discovering (and incorporating) unique techniques employed by different instructors.

The English department belongs at the center of any writing across the curriculum program to help co-ordinate its various activities, but the responsibility for improving student writing cannot and should not rest there. The activity of producing writing assignments which are creative and thought-provoking increases the opportunity to improve student comprehension and attitude in the classroom. In performing writing activities which reflect the pedagogy suggested in this essay, students cannot help but develop a greater sense of commitment to the specific material of the course, while at the same time increasing their confidence in general writing skills. A process-orientated approach to composing links together with diverse elements within an individual course; through journal entries and multiple draft essays, members of the class have a better chance of enlarging course content by discovering theme interrelationships and contrasts. If writing is, as Janet Emig insists, an act of discovery as well as "a unique mode of learning,"[7] it remains an untapped resource available to every classroom instructor, regardless of the subject being taught. The real value of a writing across the curriculum workshop forum is that it helps to stimulate thinking about incorporating less traditional forms of writing in order to achieve more effective educational results.

Endnotes

[1] Each of these workshops was co-directed by my colleague, Toby Fulwiler, who has written extensively about theories of composing, and to whose work I am herein indebted.

[2] James Britton and others, *The Development of Writing Abilities 11-18*, London: MacMillan, 1975.

[3] Arthur N. Applebee and others, "Learning to Write in the Secondary school: How and Where," *English Journal* (September 1981), pp. 78-82.

[4] As James Britton has been led to conclude, "children in school should write about what matters to them to someone who matters to them" (Britton, p. 53).

[5] Applebee, p. 81.

[6] Toby Fulwiler, "Writing: An Act of Cognition," *New Directions for Teaching and Learning: Teaching Writing in All Disciples* (December 1982), pp. 22-3.

[7] Janet Emig, *The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders* (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1971), p. 122.

> Part of our heritage...is the English tongue. You may not be among the few in whose hands it becomes an Excalibur; but you can do your part to pass it on clean, unrusted, undefiled.
>
> F.L. Lucas, *Style*, p. 35

American Studies, What Is It?

June L. Legge

I've just finished co-authoring an American Studies Guide which will be included in our high school's new Language Arts Curriculum. As I mentally reviewed what had been written, I realized how little it told about the program or the exciting activities which take place in a cooperative endeavor.

On the surface, it appears to be simply a combined class of American literature and American history, chronologically tying together a literary work and a historical period.

What really takes place however, is an intermingling of thoughts, ideas and interactions which transcend the normal boundaries of departmentalized subjects. Students no longer see Huckleberry Finn as just an example of American Literature. Instead they become involved with the whole concept of America's Golden Age. A visit to Samuel Clemens' old homestead now becomes a trip back into the past with its architectural, cultural and social differences. Mark Twain becomes alive again; his humor, his idiosyncrasies, his heart-aches, all become part of his literary works. The film "Life on the Mississippi" takes on new meaning, and students can for a little while step back in time.

From the Golden Age, we move on to the Immigrant Movement. Historically the students are made aware that the American Dream wasn't for everyone. Through a study of Upton Sinclair's The Jungle, they not only learn of man's inhumanity to other men but also are introduced to socialism and its effect on the immigrant laborer. Here is an opportunity given for the students to express themselves through either poetry or drama showing the social ills of the time. Student-written productions of dramatic scenes based on the tragedy of Ona and Jurgis (The Jungle) are performed during these double period sessions and again a period of history comes alive.

The culminating project for the Immigrant Period is an Ethnic Feast celebrating the many and varied backgrounds of our students. When the classes are exceptionally outgoing, ethnic dances and music become part of all the festivities.

One of the most popular eras studied is the Roaring Twenties. Since this period is reached after students have had other opportunities to interact, they have lost their reticence and usually are eager to participate in small group projects such as

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dance exhibitions, radio scenes and even short action movies. The Great Gatsby introduces the students to prohibition, bootlegging and the philosophy of the 20's. This is also the time they become acquainted with expatriate writers such as Hemingway, E.E. Cummings, T.S. Eliot and F. Scott Fitzgerald. However, not just their knowledge of the literary periods is expanding. At this time their history instructor prepares them for "The Great Depression," teaching them the intricacies of the stock market. They discover how easy it was to make money on the margin and how simple to build a fortune on paper only to have it all come crashing down during the 30's.

The literary classic studied during the 30's takes the students across the United States into Oklahoma, where they learn about the dust bowl and the plight of the Oakies through the study of The Grapes of Wrath.

War and books about war are studied. Students investigate wars and the causes of war in order that they may come to their own conclusions about such things as the need for war and the meaning of the word patriotism. Books like Johnny Got His Gun, Slaughterhouse Five and Bridges Over Toko-Ri offer fertile ground for thoughtful essays.

Students also use their artistic talents to create slogans like those of World War II or editorial cartoons which depict their attitudes about war and politicians in general. They listen to the war songs of the past and are helped to understand the part music plays in creating history.

Students write a research paper on any of the areas they might wish to expand or on any current issue they may find interesting. Many students enjoy researching past music or musicians such as Jazz and the Beatles. These research papers require the students to develop each of the research steps fully, and so students are reintroduced to the library. The librarian reviews the Periodical Guide to Literature, the Pamphlet File, the special areas of interest and arranges a "treasure hunt" to encourage the students to use the library in a more meaningful way.

As an introduction to the hysteria of the 50's, the students learn about Joseph McCarthy and the "witch hunts" by performing in The Crucible. Many classes are so enthusiastic about this play they also perform in After the Fall. (Students are also stimulated by the fact that Arthur Miller lives in nearby Southbury, was married to Marilyn Monroe, and took such an active part in the "Peter Reilly" murder case.)

Once the program gets into the more modern phase of history the two areas, history and literature, begin to break away from a strictly chronological approach. We now begin to talk about "change" and the effect it has on society today. Future Shock is read, but literature now moves into other genre more suitable to the study of "change". Modern poetry is analyzed and modern short stories are perused. Just where the program will go up until the end of the school year will depend upon the students themselves and the interests they have developed throughout the year.

Now as I look back over the years that American Studies has been taught I realize why I enjoy teaching it. Every year is different because every year students react differently to the material they read and study. The students become involved, and for at least one year, American History and American Literature come alive.

Man hands on misery to man.
It deepens like a coastal shelf.
Get out as early as you can,
and don't have any kids
yourself.

Philip Larkin. "This Be the Verse," lines 9-12
High Windows. New York: Farrar, Shaus & Giroux, 1974

Fiction and Nonfiction in U. S. History

William Varno

Using both fiction and nonfiction to teach early U.S. History (pre-1900) has been the modus operandi of my course for the top group of sophomores at Watertown High School for the past 15 years. Back in the era of the "multitext" course, I used such a technique to teach an evening elevtive at the local U.Conn. Branch. I also have developed Modern History units using European and Russian fiction, so "multitext" just grew as a technique. I have never enjoyed teaching the accepted point-of-view or single cause and effect from one author's text without a counterpoint or student research opportunity into multi-faceted topics.

There is a federal, state or local election every November, and every October finds me teaching the Constitution and electoral process (a deadly topic if one is concerned with student motivation). Our first non-fiction work is T.H. White's The Making of the President 1960. By individual student choice, The Making of the President 1972 is available for those of Republican bent. The 1960 book does more to expose the reality of office seeking in the U.S. today than any Constitutional study could develop. I stress the role of media, especially television, with this work. In the 1972 book we focus on the role of party organization, fund raising and convention strategy. I have developed study guides for both these books as some apolitical students have found them tough going.

Post Constitution, the Federal Period centers around Thomas Jefferson, my personal hero. Saul K. Padover's Thomas Jefferson, A Biography does the job of presenting both the thought of an American philosopher and the practical failure of much of that philosophy in confrontation with the reality of governing, while still leaving Jefferson as a politician's role model. When students finish this biography and their teacher's work with it, they know their Jeffersonian Democracy.

A particular interest of mine takes us into the Amerind (American Indian) as a unit of study for the 1840's and 50's. My students read John G. Neihardt's Black Elk Speaks for this unit. This is a 1930's interview by a journalist with an aged Cheyenne medicine man who has experienced the mystical visions of the spirits of the earth, told with a passion and relevance students come to admire and remember. Black Elk answers several questions about what happened to the Amerind and why his ways appear obsolete in his confrontation with the white westward movement. This book is self instructing and leads to a real appreciation of a native culture under seige.

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My students must read one additional work here, also in the form of an outside reading. They may choose from Dee Brown's Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (any eight chapters--because the chapters are repetitious and share the same outcome i.e. the destruction of a tribal people) or Howard Fast's The Last Frontier. The latter is an "easy read" with many opportunities for empathy on the part of the students who choose to take a break at this point.

With the Civil War period, I assign McKinley Kantor's Andersonville. I prefer John Ransom's Diary, but as a Civil War centennial publication, it went out of print. Ransom is the best prisoner of war book I have ever read. It was particularly appropriate during the P.O.W. - M.I.A. Post-Vietnam period. Kantor's Andersonville parallels Ransom but uses a more balanced Southern view into the conduct of our first war criminal to be hanged, Camp Commandant Capt. Wirtz. Andersonville has many sub-plots and is 488 pages, which serve to create problems I never experienced with John Ransom's Diary. But Kantor does develop the conditions surrounding the damning statistics of this famous death camp.

To lighten up and introduce one of my favorite units, post-Civil War urbanization and political corruption, I use the delightful 90 page Plunkitt of Tammany Hall by William Roirden. George Washington Plunkitt, an 1890's Tammany machine ward boss and corruptor, explains the rational difference between "Honest and Dishonest Graft," the demoralizing effect on patriotic fervor of the cursed civil service test and why "good guys" without organization finish last in politics. Plunkitt's Irish brogue and pragmatic philosophy captivate students who read daily of corruption on all levels. Plunkitt did it with style!

We also read the introduction and three chapters of Lincoln Steffin's classic The Shame of the Cities. Steffins, a muckraker, provides an appreciation of Plunkitt's jokes and an insight into the lack of public concern with and sometimes even pride in the extent of urban corruption. Steffins is deadly--use sparingly!

We end the year with Frederick Norris' The Octopus. This is a classical melodrama of the clash between the Western farmer-rancher Populist and the railroad monopoly. A Victorian "tear-jerker" of soap proportions, The Octopus nevertheless overcomes the difficulty of its length and pervasive pessimism concerning the one-sided confrontation with monopoly by making the point for anti-trust legislation and government intervention obvious. Previously I used Upton Sinclair's The Jungle, which has great student appeal, for this unit on reform and the Robber Barons but Junior English took this into its curriculum. Once used, its effectiveness is lost. Also Norris leaves his conclusive arguments to the reader whereas Sinclair promoted Socialism as the only effective public defense against unrestrained capitalism. I prefer that the questions be left for the student to face.

I feel that my students (some 400 to this point) have developed an awareness of the relationship between history and problem solving reality through the use of literature as history, and that this success has been well worth the time and preparation expended. Also, out of this course has grown a cooperative American literature--American History course called American Studies which has been a success as a junior year course.

We can't continue to teach from the lone text, regardless of audio-visual integration, etc., without being accused of endorsing a single author's viewpoint. I believe that thoughtful students who use historical or nonfiction come away from this contact with a true feeling of participation in education as the ideal we seek. They do not feel bored or indoctrinated.

> Every man to himself is the centre of the whole world;--the axle on which it all turns. All knowledge is but his own perception of the things around him. All love, and care for others, and solicitude for the world's welfare, are but his own feelings as to the world's wants and the world's merits.
>
> Anthony Trollope, *Can You Forgive Her?*

Using a Historic Site in a Writing Class

Beverly Beem

Sometimes I feel a bit envious of my colleagues in great cultural centers like Boston or Philadelphia. I picture them strolling into historic homes and museums after work, eating lunch at famous inns, and exploring battlefields and national monuments on holidays. I imagine them charming their classes with personal anecdotes of encounters with the haunts of famous writers and taking their students to see the sights that inspired great works. But in my more realistic moments, I realize that every community, including mine, has a history worth investigating. Witnesses to this history exist in such things as an old church, a school or government building, the home of an early settler, or even an old mill. Though the artifacts of local communities may attract less attention than those of national interest, a local place can provide a useful focus for studying the history of a community. And since no community grows up in isolation, this study can encompass many aspects of the history and culture of the entire region.

At Walla Walla College, a liberal arts college in southeastern Washington, a section of the freshman English course spent a quarter focusing all their writing on a study of the nearby Whitman Mission. Marcus and Narcissa Whitman built the Mission in 1836 to serve the Cayuse Indians, but in the westward migration of the 1840's it became increasingly important as a way-station for travelers on the Oregon Trail. Tensions grew between the two cultures, and an outbreak of violence in 1847 killed the Whitmans and destroyed the Mission. As a National Historic Site, the Mission seeks to preserve the tangible evidence of the people and events of history and put the visitor in touch with the past. Though the original Mission buildings have been destroyed, the site is preserved as a testimony to the courage of the Whitmans, the culture of the Cayuse, and the whole story of America's westward expansion. With attractive paths leading through the grounds and interpretative materials to help visitors understand what they see, the Mission is inviting both to the casual visitor out for a pleasant walk or picnic and to the serious student of history.

By choosing a historic site as a focus for writing, we hoped to give students experience in a wide variety of research and writing activities and involve them in the life of the community. With a place of local interest as the subject for writing, students have opportunity for first-hand exploration and discovery. A place just sits there and is what it is, but by approaching it with different tools of inquiry students can learn

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much about the people who inhabited the place, the times the site has endured, the customs and beliefs and activities of its people, and the values and times of the people who continue to preserve the place and visit it.

We developed a sequence of seventeen assignments that asked students to see the Mission from different perspectives, explore it with different tools, and write about it for different purposes and audiences.[1] Though the Whitman Mission was the subject of study, the class was primarily a writing class. Through their writing on the Mission, students studied and discussed the writing process and the demands that the different assignments made on them as writers. By looking at one assignment in detail and briefly describing other assignments, I will illustrate the possibilities that a local place can have for a writing class. Although the assignments described here are designed specifically for the Whitman Mission, they embody principles that can be adapted to any site important to a community.

Students first approach the Whitman Mission and learn what they can about it through their own senses. An early assignment asks them to go to the site and walk around, absorbing whatever they can:

> Before the next class meeting, go to the Whitman Mission and make your own personal acquaintance with it. Take some time when you aren't hurried to walk over the grounds and see what you can see. Then find a comfortable spot that gives you a comprehensive view of the place and sit for a while. In a notebook write as fully as you can a description of what your senses tell you about the place. What is going on at the site? Who is there? What are they doing? What natural things do you see? What man-made things do you see? Write what you see, what you hear, what you feel, and what you smell. As you write your observations, note also what you can tell about the current significance that this place has for the community and the people who visit it. Then, before you leave, make note of any questions that have occurred to you in your looking at the Mission.

The assignment puts students entirely on their own resources for writing. There are no guidebooks or secondary sources to see the place for them. Some would like to give an encyclopedic account of the Mission's history. But they cannot know about the Mission's dates through their senses. Others might be tempted to use their imagination and describe Narcissa walking by the riverbank. But they do not see Narcissa. She simply is not there. Important as it is to learn from a wide variety of sources, students here must focus on what their senses tell them. By writing exclusively from their five senses, students can see that they have within themselves the power to generate prose and that their own powers of observation are valuable in learning about a place.

The assignment, by offering students opportunity for personal discovery, gives them an original perspective for writing. Students often find that, even though they have all been looking at the same place, they have seen and described different aspects of it. Such variables as the time of day or the point of observation can make a difference in what they see. Also, their own backgrounds and interests influence the kinds of things they notice. This process of focus and selection that is a part of close observation shows the importance of individual perspective in writing.

As students describe what they see, they cannot help but notice who is there and what they are doing. They thus see something of the place the Mission continues to have in the community. A historic site, whatever its significance for an understanding of the past, is also important for what it tells about the present. The people there are not early pioneers and Indians, but community residents and visitors much like them. The people who visit the Mission and their reasons for coming tell something of the nature and values of the present community. Students may also look at the site from the perspective of the Park Service. They may note, for instance, how the Park Service makes the site available and inviting to the public while still preserving it for future visitors. Students are thus asked to consider the different times represented in a historic site--the old community preserved and the present community that preserves them.

While observing the site, noting the blend of past and present, students are asked to write down any questions that occur to them. They might ask questions about the place itself. Why is it there? Who built it? Why did they build it the way they did and where they did and how they did and when they did? They might wonder why the Park Service chose not to restore the destroyed buildings. Questions may deal with the terrain and how it influenced the activities of the people there. They might ask questions about the objects found on the site. They might ask what values the site has for the community now. These questions, stemming from their direct observation, lead to an understanding of what can yet be discovered. And asking questions about what they see is the first step to finding answers. Some of these questions can be answered by further observation; some cannot. Students are then led to consider the limitations of observation as well as its possibilities. And they can see how their initial observation of the site has laid the groundwork for more study and writing.

Though students can learn much about a site by careful observation, there are many things their senses just cannot tell them. Another assignment illustrates this. Students are asked to describe the place as it would have looked during the time of the Whitmans. In a variation of this assignment, students are asked to write their description from the perspective of a particular person at that time. Writing such a description requires students to deal with problems of viewpoint. For instance, a description written by an Indian might well differ from that written by Narcissa Whitman or a traveler on the Oregon Trail. And in any case, the assignment requires a historical imagination and information beyond the powers of observation. They can tell a little of what the Mission might have looked like from their senses. They can see the terrain, but they might well ask if the river bed has changed or which of the trees were there. They can tell by the foundations that there were buildings, but to know what the buildings looked like, they must go to other sources.

To prepare for this assignment, students do several supporting assignments. They are asked to find as many sources of information on the Mission as they can. The Whitman Mission, being a National Historic Site, offers many kinds of interpretation materials. Students start with these. They may note such things as markers, tapes, films, museum displays, books and pamphlets, old journals, and maps. They may find a Park Service expert willing to talk with them. They may also look beyond the site for sources of information. The library is an important resource. They may find histories of the town or files of local newspapers. They may discover a long-time resident or a town official who knows the area's history. They may have to use some ingenuity in finding materials about a place, but they can find a wide variety of sources in everything from archives to attics.

Then, these different sources of information can be the basis for many kinds of writing assignments. For instance, students can interview someone with special knowledge about the site. They may interview a historian or a librarian or a newspaper reporter. It might be possible for the teacher to bring together a panel of scholars from different fields such as history, architecture, archaeology, and interior design to discuss the site and answer questions.

In another assignment, students role-play as archaeologists who discover the artifacts in the museum. They are asked first to write up a complete set of field notes describing and categorizing their find. Another assignment can ask students to work from these notes and write a report to an archaeological journal. They can describe the artifacts and draw conclusions about their significance in understanding the Mission.

In all of these activities, students are actually researching the site. A place of local interest can be an effective focus for a research project. Instead of writing entirely from library sources, students find they can make use of many kinds of resources. The assignments are designed to ask students to observe the site, ask questions about what they see, and pursue answers. And since the answer to one question often leads to more questions, students can develop over the course a growing need to know and a greater ability to find out. The emphasis on asking questions and seeking answers underscores the importance of intellectual curiosity and personal observation in research and writing. Thus, a historic site can give students experience in many ways of coming to know and possibly expand their understanding of what it means to research.

As students work together in learning about a place of common interest, they can become more aware of themselves as a community of writers, working together, reading and responding to each other's work, comparing notes, and watching the growth of individual interests. And because their subject is of interest to the community, students may also find that they have an audience outside the classroom. Others in the community, such as the local paper or the school paper or a community organization, might be interested in their work. Or they can role play, as students of the Whitman Mission once did, by supposing to write for an archaeological journal. They can write an article on some aspect of the site for a scholarly journal or a magazine or a newspaper. And even though their works do not achieve wider recognition, they can pool their writings among themselves and find that together they form a community of writers and readers.

Therefore, while a historic site is the consistent subject of students' exploration, it is possible to combine that focus with the major objective of the course, writing. The process of writing is uppermost in class discussion. Students examine different ways of coming to know as they read each other's writing about the Mission. They also discuss the effects of shaping their material for different purposes and different audiences. So, the class discussions and assignments ask students to look at their process of writing about the site and to analyze what they have learned and how they have learned it, both about the site and about writing.

By choosing a National Historic site as a subject for writing, we had the help of the National Park Service in providing resources. However, any place of local interest, just by its being there, invites questions from an attentive observer and can be an effective focus for a writing class. Asking questions of a site and seeking answers to these questions from different sources can be the basis of much writing. A teacher can develop assignments that ask students to approach a site from different perspectives, examine it with different tools, draw conclusions based on their exploration, and communicate their conclusions to a variety of audiences. By focusing on a place important to the community, a course can involve students in the history of their own region and give them experience in many different writing activities.

Notes

[1] These assignments were developed at the Institute of Writing, a joint project by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the University of Iowa. The complete sequence of assignments is available in the collection of Institute-designed writing curricula: Courses for Change in Writing: A Selection from the NEH/Iowa Institute, edited by Carl Klaus and Nancy Jones (Boynton/Cook--Iowa, 1984.)

Creating Readers Who Look for Something

Susan Monroe Nugent and Harold E. Nugent

Harold Herber believes that "A reader who looks for something will find it; a reader who looks for nothing will find that, too." After assigning an essay to our freshmen at Keene State College, we often discover that our students don't know what to look for when reading. Consequently, they look for nothing and are unable to recall what they read. As teachers, our task is to help these students become active in the process of reading essays, to prepare them to look for something. The approach we teach is applicable to many types of nonfiction and is easily modified for various levels of students. The process is designed to increase the reader's comprehension and retention of material being read. Its major asset is that readers can transfer the approach; it is process general, not content specific.

The approach which we call Intellectual Framework Analysis is quickly labeled IFA by our students. What we are trying to accomplish is to lead students not only to better comprehension and retention, but to a better understanding of the author's view of the world, the author's intellectual framework. How does the author organize that world? What order and values does he or she impose on the flux and flow of experiences? How can our students best analyze and evaluate this world? These are challenging questions, but the IFA provides students with a method for finding answers.

To demonstrate our use of this method, we will provide sample student responses to the first section of The Art of Loving by Erich Fromm. This book is difficult for most college freshmen. Consequently, students discover the worth of the Intellectual Framework Analysis. They need an aid to understand, organize, and internalize Fromm's ideas. Selection of demanding material leads the students to a "felt need" for developing reading skills.

In teaching the Intellectual Framework Analysis, we go through the following five major sections and related questions step-by-step. Only after students discuss and give evidence of grasping each question do we ask for written responses. (For a complete list of questions, turn to the final section of this article.) Also, because our students know these questions will be asked in class, both in small groups and large discussions, they begin to look for something while reading; they look for answers to these questions.

Initial questions ask students to become more aware of the author's perceptions of the subject. First we ask students, "What

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is the *subject matter* of this book?" An initial response is "Love." Other students confine that in varying ways: "Fromm believes that love is an art so he spends the book proving it." or "Fromm shows us how overcoming separateness through love means hard work." At this point, such responses are first approximations to the truth, adequate since the remainder of our questions will draw out specific references and more comprehensive answers.

Next, the student focuses on *classifications* that the author makes. How does the author break up the subject matter? How does the author focus and classify love? Students are encouraged to test major classifications and share findings in small groups. Students often utilize lists to organize their responses. For example:

Means of Overcoming Separateness
- Orgiastic State
- Creative Ability
- Conformity
- Symbiotic Union
- Love

Orgiastic States
- Drugs
- Sex
- Alcohol

Types of Love
- Motherly Love
- Brotherly Love
- Erotic Love
- Self-Love
- Love of God

Discussion of both major and minor classifications occurs in small and large groups. Part of the student's task is to determine which classifications are most important.

After classifying the subject matter, the student examines *distinctions* made by the author. Distinctions are defined as classifications of subject matter that involve a "distinct" value judgment by the author. The class often discusses how the author's value judgment differs from a student's. Here is an opportunity for students to address exactly what they find upsetting or foreign in Fromm. For example, the idea of love as work is not the romantic view held by many eighteen and nineteen year old students. Based on their analysis, they want to express their agreements and disagreements with the author. A dialogue is the result.

Below are some distinctions found within the first section of Fromm. What students perceive as Fromm valuing has been underlined.

Love as an Art versus Love as a Pleasant Sensation
Chance and luck versus *Effort and work*
To love versus To be loved
Active versus Passive
To receive versus *To give*
Permanent love versus temporary sensations
Standing in love versus falling in love

Our students begin to see how Fromm shapes his proposition that love is an art. Each valued distinction relates back to that premise. Throughout the book, Fromm presents varying views of love, but he directly or indirectly signals his value judgment as related to his major distinctions.

The last section of Part I asks the students to list definitions. The definitions required are ones central to the author's subject matter, classifications, and distinctions. For instance, in the first section of Fromm's book, Fromm refers to "symbiotic union." He utilizes this term to refer to masochistic and sadistic relationships, not in the physical sense but rather referring to the emotional dependency of such unions. Consequently, the student who does not fully understand Fromm's use of this particular term may be misled as to Fromm's view of love.

Part I, subject matter, classifications, distinctions, and definitions, is designed to help students read actively. They look for these while reading, and, with practice, they find them. Parts II through IV of the IFA require students to analyze how the author proves the value judgments. Such analysis leads the student to evaluation of the author's work. The first question, "What techniques of proof does the author use?" is broken down into several parts. A first step toward an answer is determination of what intellectual strategies (Odell, 1976) Fromm uses to validate his arguments. Students have already noted that Fromm utilizes an abundance of Contrast, e.g. active versus passive, to love versus to be loved. He also classifies the subject of love in many ways. However, as students readily agree, he does not use much Temporal Sequence. Other students point out evidence of dated views (lack of change), that today are considered sexist in nature. For example, he suggests that the majority of women believe they must be coy and domestic in order to snag a husband. Our discussion centers around whether or not this material weakens his overall argument. Students decide Fromm's major point is that we package ourselves for what will sell on the marriage market. Recognition of Fromm's major concept leads students to examine today's commercial as well as personal methods of packaging.

Other analytic questions lead up to the final evaluation of Fromm's work. Is Fromm primarily inductive or deductive in his presentation of material? Is he objective or subjective in his writing? Are his facts verified or accepted? Students quickly grasp the concept of inductive and deductive presentation of material. They analyze various sections of Fromm's book, indicating that they believe he uses deductive reasoning predominantly throughout the book. They also appreciate knowing up-front Fromm's position on each point, an advantage of deductive presentation.

In examining the nature of the author's examples, we work with differentiating between facts and opinions. First, we examine the author's use of facts. Freshmen note that Fromm often utilizes the Bible for verification of his beliefs. Other sources are also noted. Freshmen have constantly amazed us with their insights at this stage of the process. For example, the primary verification of Fromm's book, according to the students, is not what he cites, but rather his writing makes students turn to their own lives for verification. In other words, Fromm's claims are verified by the reader. It is at this point we can see how involved our readers have become. They not only agree and disagree with Fromm, they offer their own life experiences as verification of their agreement or disagreement.

Next we look at opinions used by the author. At this time it is fruitful to introduce the concept of a continuum with opinions along a line from highly subjective to highly objective. Our classes respond that Fromm tried hard to be objective and aware of his audience. He explains line-by-line what he means, analyzing both his own as well as alternative views. However objective the writing is, students point out that we still have his world, the subject matter, colored by the author's perception and subsequent value judgment.

After discussing Fromm's manner of reasoning and his nature of examples, students address the question of author's motivation. Why did Fromm write this book? Some ponder who the audience for the book is. Eventually students reach consensus that Fromm wanted to provide his readership with new information about love. As the book was not written for the purpose of light entertainment, the readership, we all agreed, must be initially concerned with learning more about the concept of love. Fromm wanted to show thoughtful people, people still open to new views of love, how much better the world would be if people spent time on loving. Consequently, Fromm's motivation was to help such people evaluate their lives, reconsider their values, and change their attitudes toward love. Fromm's ultimate aim, the students concluded, is to create a harmonious world.

Before evaluating the book, readers consider how the form of this book adds to the content. Here, we consider the difficulty of The Art of Loving. Many students have experienced problems with comprehension at some point during the reading of this book. How does the reading complexity relate to the complexity of the subject matter? Students realize that Fromm believes that love requires patience, effort, and concentration just as reading the book required the same skills. We consider whether or not Fromm makes us prove that we have the qualities necessary to love effectively when we finish his book. that is, have we passed the test for patience, effort, and concentration? Are we now capable of being better lovers?

At this point, students are ready to evaluate Fromm's book. Has Fromm fulfilled his purpose? Has he succeeded in accomplishing what the students perceive his motivation to be? For this book, students must ask themselves if they have reexamined their lives, values, and attitudes toward love. What changes have occurred? Evaluation becomes individual because for some, Fromm has succeeded, while for others, Fromm failed. However, both sets of students now have much to say when evaluating this book.

Following is the form we share with our freshmen while they are becoming familiar with the Intellectual Framework Analysis.

Intellectual Framework Analysis
(An approach to reading nonfiction prose)

I. Subject Matter: After identifying the material, author, and publication, write one or two sentences stating briefly what the article is about.

A. Classifications: How is the subject matter divided? While reading, list the divisions of these main points. In some cases the author may only imply classifications. Therefore the reader will need to complete the implied classification. Place an asterisk next to those items supplied by the reader.

B. Distinction. Go back over the classifications of the subject matter and select those which the author has placed in opposition. Using numbers and letters illustrate major and subordinate distinctions. Underline the distinction to which the author attaches a value judgment. Write one or two sentences explaining the author's major preferences.

C. Definitions. How does the author define key terms as found under classifications and distinctions? Note those terms that are inadequately defined.

II. Techniques of Analysis and Proof: How are the author's value judgments supported? Which of the following techniques are primary to the author's analysis and argument? Write a short critique of these processes with ample specific reference to the work.

A. Intellectual Strategy	Linguistic Cues
1. View	I, you, he, our, we, they,...
2. Focus	Grammatical subject(s) of sentence
3. Physical Context	Names of objects around subject
4. Classification	is, are, divided into,...
5. Analogy	like, as, similar, resembles...
6. Contrast	on the other hand, but, however,...
7. Change	develop, evolve, increase, ...
8. Temporal Sequence	now, then, after, next, ...
9. Logical Sequence	therefore, because, if...then,...
10. Illustration	for example, for instance,...

B. Manner of Reasoning
  1. Deductive
  2. Inductive

C. Nature of Examples
  1. Facts
    a. verified
    b. accepted
  2. Opinions
    a. objective
    b. subjective

III. Motivation. What is the author's primary purpose in writing the article? Are secondary motivations present?

IV. Form to Content: Comment on the way vocabulary, sentence structure, and general format are used to achieve the author's purpose.

V. Evaluation: Write a short theme evaluating how effectively the author classifies, contrasts, defines, values, proves, and structures the subject and intended message. In short, how do sections I, II, and IV contribute to III? In conclusion, consider first the value of the work to the general audience for whom the article is written, and second, how worthwhile you the reader consider this material.

In conclusion, the Intellectual Framework Analysis creates active readers, readers who are constantly looking form information while they read. Such readers become more effective in both understanding and retaining information. At first the IFA may appear cumbersome, but it can be readily condensed as it is used. The ultimate goal is to have the reader practice the procedures in such a personal manner that the process can be internalized. We encourage student to "collapse" the process once they have performed one or two fully bloomed analyses. Subsequently, students start jotting classifications, distinctions, and value judgments in the margins of texts, and underlining key words.

The IFA questions make the student, in Bruner's words, "go beyond the information given" to connect previous experiences and information, enabling each to evaluate more effectively the essay or book. Most students want to discuss the value judgments or the author's success or, sometimes, the failure to fulfill the purpose. For the readers, especially the more advanced students, the IFA provides many reading and writing connections. If a writer is to communicate effectively, he or she must provide clear classifications, distinctions, value judgments, definitions, and proof. Such techniques contribute to the writer's intention: adding, substituting, or rearranging the reader's image of the subject matter. Thus the Intellectual Framework Analysis can contribute to creating more fit readers and writers.

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An Essay for Life: Joan Didion's "On Self-Respect"

Barbara Matthews

Jean Didion has been my favorite contemporary essayist since 1968 when I first read Slouching Towards Bethlehem. I was equally impressed with her tightly woven novel Play It as It Lays (1970). Her subsequent works, A Book of Common Prayer (novel, 1977), The White Album (essays, 1979) and Salvadore (essay, 1983) I felt to be as rewarding, interesting, and involving as her first pieces. However, I have found more and more that I frequently return to Slouching Towards Bethlehem. I discovered not only that these essays reveal tremendous insight into American morals, interests, and traditions, but also that they present a philosophy of life which shows courage, discipline, and maturity. The essay which best depicts these features is "On Self-Respect."

Obviously, I found this piece important and intellectually exciting. But, how does one transmit this enthusiasm to a class, especially when it deals with what students consider to be the driest type of writing, the essay? Fortunately, Didion solves this problem for the teacher.

First, "On Self-Respect" is neatly divided into three sections, each integrally tied to the next. Second, Didion's "lean" style of writing is a joy to read. And, third, the topic itself, a person's self-respect, is one in which everyone is interested.

The first of the three parts of the essay deals with Didion's definition of what self-respect is and what it is not. Didion states: "[It is] a certain toughness, a kind of moral nerve; they (people with self-respect) display what was once called Character..." What self-respect has nothing to do with is how others perceive us, for they are, "after all, deceived easily enough."

The second part of the essay presents an example from America's past which Didion believes exemplifies "character", that necessary quality for all who want self-respect. She points to an episode described in young Narcissa Cornwall's diary where Indians are unexpectedly entering the family cabin. Narcissa Cornwall does not panic because "Indians were simply part of the donnee." To focus on exactly what this anecdote illustrates, Didion summarizes at the end of the section: "They (people with self-respect) are willing to invest something of themselves; they may not play at all, but when they do play, they know the odds."

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The final section of the essay deals with the characteristics of people who lack self-respect. These individuals are willing to try any pose because they have no identity of their own. "Of course I will play Francesca to your Paolo, Helen Keller to anyone's Annie Sullivan: no expectation is too misplaced, no role too ludicrous." At the same time, they despise the people who believe their act. Finally, the person lacking self-respect becomes paralyzed. Any decision that has to be made becomes too difficult. "...that we could say 'no' without drowning in self-reproach is an idea alien to this game." By the end of the work Didion convinces us that without self-respect we are lost, but to have it "is potentially to have everything."

The words "lean" and "tight" automatically come to mind when describing Didion's style. In the basic structure described above, no idea is unnecessarily repeated and no example is superfluous. In part one Didion defines self-respect; in part two she gives examples of it; and in part three she describes the devastating effects of not having it. Didion has examined the topic from all angles without belaboring any one. She makes a point and then either builds from it or proceeds to a new but related topic.

An essay entitled "On Self-Respect" frequently evokes images of a pompous and didactic piece of writing. This is far from true with the Didion essay. It is more of a manual for discerning what self-respect is and how we can try to achieve it. The need for self-respect is part of the human condition. It "frees us from the expectations of others, to give us back to ourselves..." Examining this topic is important to our peace of mind and to our growth.

I often end the lesson dealing with this essay by telling the students that exposing them to this piece of writing is my gift to them. I feel it is as important as any literature I teach, and maybe more relevant to their everyday lives. I myself read this essay three or four times a year to remember that I have to take responsibility for my actions. This essay helps me from losing myself; from "running away to find oneself, and finding no one at home."

How vigorous a Force
that holds without a Prop
Truth stays Herself--and every man
That trust her--boldly up.

Dickinson, Complete Poems..., #780

Can "The Meaning of Life" Have Meaning in High School?

Harriet Marriner

Many high school English instructors in southern California teach Camus' The Stranger, using Stuart Gilbert's translation. The students seem to enjoy reading Camus, possibly for the lucidity of his prose, or at least its seeming simplicity. For some years I too included The Stranger on my course reading list (whatever the course was called, i.e. Contemporary Literature, The Novel, Honors English, etc.). But then one day a student in fifth year French showed me a version of the novel in the original language, and I came to realize that Gilbert's translation was actually an interpretation more than a faithful rendering.

Keeping in mind the interest in Camus, I tried The Plague the following year, though again the translation was by Gilbert. Students found this book more "challenging," that is, longer and more difficult to read. Still, they met the challenge and even grew to analyze it in greater depth than they had examined The Stranger. The notion of whether it was a parable (or metaphor?) for World War II intrigued them, leading to lengthy, heated and interesting class discussions.

As the interest in Camus mounted, I added more of his works to my collateral reading list. Though few every managed to digest The Rebel (yes, I'm getting to nonfiction, but let me do it in my longwinded way), quite a number read The Fall, often making astute parallels with The Stranger. No way was I going to let die this interest in a major contemporary writer. Though The Rebel didn't seem "attractive," I did want to move to a work of nonfiction by Camus; that is, to move from a writer's fictional mode to a philosophical one. This movement led me to The Myth of Sisyphus, a collection of Camus' essays translated by Justin O'Brien.

Whatever interest there had been in Camus' other works paled before the intensity with which they absorbed Sisyphus. Here was a writer who did superbly what they had been struggling for so many years in English classes to do: write literate essays, on important topics no less. Suicide, war, passion, religion, in other words the search for a reason for being, all this was in Sisyphus. They read and re-read the paperbacks, carrying them as a sort of badge (I Heart Camus?) in jeans pockets, purses, lunch bags, so that I wished I'd ordered them in Permabound, and will have to do so soon.

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Now, what is there in The Myth of Sisyphus that others might care to know? The book is actually a collection of essays centered on therories of the absurd. Camus starts out with the question of suicide, which he considers to be the "one truly serious philosophical problem." Here is a topic that fascinates students, especially at this time when teenage suicide rates are so high. In clear prose it seems Camus is speaking right to them when he rejects the notion of life being so futile there is no sense in living it through. As he amasses his argument, he refers to other profound thinkers: Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Jaspers. The reference to these philosophers can lead students into numerous abstruse realms they would otherwise have not pursued had they not "discovered" Camus.

In the course of his discussion, Camus wonders if there is anything one feels so strongly about that it is worth dying for; he decides there is nothing. He brings up Galileo, "who held a scientific truth of great importance, abjured it with the greatest ease as soon as it endangered his life." The scientist did not feel "that truth was worth the stake." This leads to serious questions of values, as students ponder what might be worth dying for, and come to the understanding Camus had, that life is worth living.

Contemplation of suicide includes the question of death (if life is worth living, why must I die?) and the future. Obviously these topics are of great concern to young people, and they are struck by Camus' view of his future: "I create for myself barriers between which I confine my life." He considers actors, who "must die to the stage" and in this connection refers to Shakespeare and Moliere. At one time persons who chose the acting profession were actually choosing excommunication (in fact, Moliere was refused last rites, after having died on the stage during a production of The Imaginary Invalid). To an actor, though, excommunication was a vague threat, and "what significance could such vague threats have compared to the final punishment that life itself was reserving for them?"

In an essay on philosophy and fiction, Camus elaborated on those he calls "the great novelists"--Balzac, Melville, Kafka, Dostoyevsky--these famous writers often taught, or at least referred to, in school. He singles out Dostoyevsky's Kirilov, who anguished over the existence of God and arrived at the notion that "if God does not exist, I am god." Here, then, is another essay worthy of careful scrutiny by teacher and pupils alike. Perhaps from it students will be drawn to Dostoyevsky (if they already haven't been), in whose works the theme of suicide is so prevalent, and espeically to The Possessed, which lacks the "high school popularity" of, say, Crime and Punishment.

The best being reserved for last, I come finally to a discussion of the title essay, "The Myth of Sisyphus." Only four pages long, it contains compressed truth. First Camus deals with the Greek myth of Sisyphus, especially as told by Homer. Camus describes the punishment inflicted upon Sisyphus by the gods, who believed "there is no more dreadful punishment than futile and hopeless labor." Students are so fascinated by this essay that I have often asked them to take turns reading it aloud. The description awes them: "one sees merely the whole effort of a body straining to raise the huge stone, to roll it and push it up a slope a hundred times over; one sees the face screwed up, the cheek tight against the stone, the shoulder bracing the clay-covered mass, the foot wedging it, the fresh start with arms outstretched, the wholly human security of two earth clotted hands."

At the end of that passage, students are practically gasping. They are straining for Sisyphus. Then, when his rock rolls down the mountain they are gripped by his anguish as he takes a step "toward the torment of which he will never know the end." Their naturally idealistic spirits are fighting against the seemingly obvious unfairness of the punishment, while at the same time their intellects are marvelling at the quality of Camus' wording.

At this point they have read Camus but have not fully comprehended him, for if they had they would be prepared for the philosophical climax the author gives to the whole story. They are unprepared, but finally enlightened when Camus declares that Sisyphus is "stronger than his rock." Now the injustice is clarifed (the aha! response is at work). Sisyphus, master of his days, is aware of the barriers which control his life, and the response he must make to these barriers.

Yet, along with the scorn Sisyphus heaps on his rock, there is sorrow. Along with the silent joy of controlling his fate, there is the melancholy memory of the "sparkling sea, the smiles of earth." Again, Camus with his precision of explanation helps us to accept all this: "There is no sun without shadow, and it is essential to know the night." That sentence was the one almost every student chose when I asked them all to pick the single sentence in the book they felt to be most meaningful to them.

At the end of his essay Camus leaves Sisyphus at the foot of his mountain, but that is not where the students leave him. They still envision him straining up the peak and shoving the burden he is condemned to bear. But now they see him with a difference, for like Camus they "must imagine Sisyphus happy."

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Bettelheim's *Uses of Enchantment* as Part of a Storytelling Unit

Rose Reissman

Each year as part of a project where junior high students are trained to compete in a storytelling contest, I do a unit on the significance of fairy tales. This unit which involves four weeks of activities includes a visit by a professional storyteller, student storytelling, original student fairy tales, and student parodies of fairy tales (a la Russell Baker "Little Red Riding Hood Revisited").

This year I decided to incorporate the thesis and the approach of Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975) into my unit. First I extracted quotes from his book which highlighted his major themes about the necessity for fantasy in every child's life. Then I also designed some follow-up activities for gifted students to do which derived from their study of the quotes.

I began the unit by asking the students in my class what their favorite fairy tales were and why these fairy tales appealed to them. The students volunteered their favorites and were quite candid about their reasons for the appeal of these tales. Many students in an 85% minority urban school setting picked Cinderella because its 'Prince Charming will rescue you' theme. Others favored "Jack and the Giant Killer" because it showed you can 'win out over the big guy' as the underdog does in the popular film *Rocky*.

After we had discussed our favorites and the sources of their appeal, I sent each of the students out to interview at least three other people about their fairy tale favorites (parents and siblings were allowable). Surprisingly the results of the students' independent surveys, which extended to junior high students not in our classes, reflected Bettelheim's views on Cinderella and Jack and the Beanstalk.

At this point I gave my students the activity sheets on Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*. I presented Bettelheim to my students as a child psychologist who had studied the appeal of fairy tales and had written this book about them. We spent two lessons discussing what Bettelheim's views on the meaning and the significance of fairy tales were. This was done by the students' explaining selected quotes from the attached quote sheets. For each quote we discussed, the students first stated what Bettelheim's statements about the fairy tales were and then how the students responded to his views.

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Finally we had a debate about the necessity of fantasy in the lives of today's children as opposed to the relevancy of the juvenile issue centered (divorce, custody battles, drugs, poverty) fiction. The majority of students initially were in favor of the necessity of fantasy for young children. In the debate the pro fantasy side won heavily. Many students wrote very moving defenses of fairy tales. Indeed many of the minority students said that even though the principal characters in the fairy tales were white, blond, and upper class, they identified with their problems.

The students interviewed their parents to see if their objections to fairy tales were the same as those Bettelheim discusses. Most of the parents interviewed did not object to fairy tales at all. Some of the Oriental parents told their children fairy tales they had grown up with which were quite similar in plot and in theme to the traditional fairy tales.

As a coda to the unit, some of the students analyzed the ways in which some classic children's literature (_Peter Pan_, _The Wizard of Oz_) reflect the themes and the characters of the traditional fairy tales. On their own some students analysed the ways in which contemporary film blockbusters such as _E.T._ used some of the conventions of fantasies.

At a teacher training conference for elementary teachers, I introduced the Bettelheim unit. The teachers completed the favorite fairy tale survey at the workshop. Many of them did the survey with their students and had the children go out to survey their friends and relatives.

I feel that average and gifted upper elementary students as well as junior high students can do the surveys and parent interviews. They can also focus on the issue of whether fairy tales and fantasy are important in children's lives today. The quotes might be used sparingly at first and perhaps more liberally as the unit progresses. High school students should be able to do all the activities detailed on the sheets in a most sophisticated manner.

Bettelheim's study of fairy tales really sparked my own students' involvement in the study of fairy tales. I was surprised by their enthusiastic affirmation of his views. _The Uses of Enchantment_ may well enchant students as much as it has enchanted educators.

ACTIVITY SHEETS

The Uses of Enchantment
by Bruno Bettelheim

In 1975 Bruno Bettelheim a famous child psychologist published a book which discusses the values of fairy tales. This book won The National Book Award and The National Book Critics Circle Award that year. Below some quotes from the book which were excerpted to give you a summary of Mr. Bettelheim's ideas about fairy tales. Read them carefully.

- "The most important and also the most difficult task in raising a child is helping him to find meaning in life."
- "nothing is more important than the impact of parents and others who take care of the child; second in importance is our cultural heritage...it is literature that carries such information best."
- A story "must stimulate his imagination; help him to develop his intellect and to clarify his emotions."
- "nothing can be as enriching and satisfying to child and adult alike as the folk fairy tale."
- "He [the child] needs ideas on how to bring his inner house into order, and on that basis be able to create order in his life."
- Quotes Schiller who said: "Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told to me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life."
- "reading and being read to are the essential means of education."
- "the prevalent parental belief is that a child must be diverted from what troubles him most."
- The message of fairy tales is that "a struggle against severe difficulties in life in unavoidable, an intrinsic part of human existence."
- "The fairy tale...confronts the child squarely with the basic human predicaments."
- "in fairy tales evil is as omnipresent as virtue."
- "it is important to provide the modern child with images of heros who have to go out into the world all by themselves..."
- "Today, even more than in the past times, the child needs the reassurance offered by the image of the isolated man who nevertheless is capable of achieving meaningful and rewarding relations with the world around him."
- "Fairy tales enrich the child's life and give it an enchanged quality just because he does not quite know how the stories have worked their wonder on him."
- "Fairy stories provide reassurance to children that they can eventually get the better of the giant, i.e. they can grow up to be like the giant and acquire the same powers."
- "the ending...in myths is nearly always tragic, while always happy in fairy tales."
- "The myth is pessimistic, while the fairy story is optimistic."
- "The fairy tale...makes clear that it tells about everyman, people very much like us."
- "'The Three Little Pigs' teaches the nursery age child in a most enjoyable and dramatic form that we must not be lazy and take things easy, for if we do, we may perish."
- "A child trusts what the fairy tale tells, because its world view accords with his own."
- "fairy tales both delight and instruct."
- "strictly realistic stories run counter to the child's inner experiences."
- "a fare of realistic stories only is barren."
- "While a fairy tale may contain many dreamlike features,its great advantage over a dream is that the fairy tale has a consistent structure with a definite beginning and a plot that moves toward a satisfying solution which is reached at the end."
- "Fairy tales indicate that, somewhere hidden, the good fairy godmother watches over the child's fate, ready to assert her power when critically needed."
- "The fairy tale motif of the child abused and rejected by older siblings is well known all though history, especially in the form of Cinderella."
- "if Mother disappoints him, there is the fairy princess in the back of his mind...If Father is less attentive to his little girl than she desires, she can endure such adversity because a prince will arrive who will prefer her to all competitors."
- "Mothers cannot accept their little boys' wishes to do away with Daddy and marry Mommy; but a mother can participate with pleasure in her son's imagining himself as the dragon slayer who gains possession of the beautiful princess."

- "The 'truth' of fairy stories is the truth of our imagination."
- "what is this kingdom which many fairy tale heroes gain at the story's end?...To become a king or queen at the conclusion of the story symbolizes a state of true independence, in which the hero feels as secure, satisfied, and as happy as the infant felt in his most dependent state."

Bruno Bettelheim realizes that many parents have strong objections to fairy tales. Here are some of the objections raised to fairy tales that he cites and responds to.

- "Some parents fear that by telling their children about fantastic events found in fairy tales, they are 'lying'to them."
- "Some parents fear that their children may get carried away by their fantasies; that when exposed to fairy tales, they will come to believe in magic."
- "Other parents fear that a child's mind may become so overfed by fairy tale fantasies as to neglect learning to cope with reality."
- "Those who outlawed traditional folk fairy tales decided that if there were monsters in a story told to children, these must all be friendly."
- "because the child is already afraid of so many things, anything else that looked fearsome should be kept from him."

Activities

1. Select a fairy tale. Show how the tale you selected fits into the way Bettelheim analyzes fairy tales. Analyze it further as Bettelheim would.

2. Do you agree with Bettelheim's points about the purposes of children's stories? Explain in detail why you agree or disagree with his points.

3. Which contemporary (new) stories written for children satisfy Bettelheim's standards for fairy tales? You might want to read through some stories such as those by Sendak in the children's section of the library and select those new stories which seem to you to share the qualities of fairy tales. For each story you select sum up the plot and characters. Note the date of publication and the author. You might also want to comment on the illustrations.

4. React to at least twelvec of Bettelheim's quotes about fairy tales. Tell what each quote means and explain whether you agree or disagree with the quote.

5. Examine the objections made by parents to fairy tales. Do your parents agree with these objections? Ask their opinions.

6. Which fairy tale was your favorite when you were very young? What made this story so special to you? Do you remember any other stories you loved? Why did you like these stories? What fascinated you about these stories?

7. Ask your younger brothers and sisters or relatives or neighbors which fairy tales are their favorites? List these and try to note what is special about these stories.

Gibbon's Decline and Fall: Nonfiction History as a Literary Classic

Pepper Worthington

To introduce the nonfiction genre of an historical classic to a secondary English class is a challenge, because students will inevitably ask, "Why read a history book in an English class?" This question presupposes that the genre of historical nonfiction is off limits to an English class; consequently, the first step for an English teacher in selecting the genre of an historical classic is to locate a history which has lasted not only because its content has remained valid but also because its style has survived time.

Such a history exists. The abridged version of Edward Gibbon's The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1982, 735 pages) provides a startling nonfiction text of classic composition techniques. Gibbon's artistic literary style has made his history a classic, read since 1787 by generations of English as well as history students who admire the craft of language.

To teach Gibbon in the English classroom I recommend a threefold procedure; (1) Introduce Gibbon's nonfiction historical classic as a literary composition with specific artistic techniques. (2) Introduce the historical class as an eighteenth-century style at its best. (3) Focus on Gibbon's lietmotif of his theme of decline and fall, a theme of nonfictional impact and importance. These three methods of teaching Gibbon's historical classic will provide a unique pattern for analyzing and recognizing what makes a composition a classic.

First, introduce the artistic techniques Gibbon uses. You might include the following ten techniques for class identification, definition, and analysis: (a) use of epithet, (b) use of allusions, (c) use of paradox, (d) use of personification, (e) use of oxymorons, (f) use of similes, (g) use of alliteration, (h) use of metaphors, (i) use of irony, and (j) use of contrast. These literary techniques increase Gibbon's mastery of the English language and place him in the nonfiction genre of the historical classic writer.

Perhaps the best way to emphasize artistic techniques in composition is to examine them. You can start the students reading Gibbon by illustrating examples of specific literary devices. The epithet is a favorite device with Gibbon, especially with the titles he gives to the Roman emperors. Commodus

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is called "the indolent prince" (77) while Theodosius is called "the great Theodosius" (480). Constantine merits "*equal to the Apostles*" (359) while Augustus is titled "artful prince" (66).

Gibbon's fondness for allusions offers the English teacher a chance to study echoes in literature and to create an interest in giving composition an added depth of resonance through this technique. Gibbon notes that Alexander was called both "Ajax and Hercules" (120), that Colvis was called "the new Joshua" and "the new Gideon" (626), and that Julian was called the one inspired by "Minerva" (348). Gibbon notes that Mohammed the Second's guards were "robust as Hercules, dexterous as Appollo" (700). In his most subtle, poetic manner Gibbon describes how Rome arose from the conflageration of Nero's reign "with fresh beauty from her ashes" (703).

Paradox is an artistic technique Gibbon uses to heighten the complexity of human nature. Perhaps the paradox of Clovis stands out in *The Decline and Fall*.

> ...His ambitious reign was a perpetual violation of moral and Christian duties; his hands were stained with blood in peace as well as in war; and, as soon as Clovis had dismissed a synod of the Gallician church, he calmly assassinated *all* the princes of the Merovingian race.
>
> (624)

Personification is usually identified as a poetic device, but why can't Gibbon use personification in prose? He does. When Maxentius becomes emperor, "Rome, which had so long regretted the absence, lamented, during six years of his reign, the presence of her sovereign" (210). Gibbon personifies a trait when he writes: "Adversity had exercised and displaced the genius of Alaric" (521).

The oxymoron is a tricky device, linking opposite traits in a curious hold. Gibbon enjoys this technique when he writes about "melancholy pleasure" (97), "judicious malaci: (393), "pious suicide" (615), "*celestial* life" (616), "*gentle barbarians*" (624).

Similes are used infrequently but appropriately in Gibbon's nonfiction classic. We smile as we read about a "sagacious counsellor" who "reasoned like an ignorant barbarian" (145). We confront Gibbon's attack on Christian revelation when we read his famous simile:

> ...When their devout minds were sufficiently prepared by a course of prayer, of fasting, and of vigils, to receive the extraordinary impulse, they were transported out of their senses, and delivered in ecstasy that was inspired, being mere organs of the Holy Spirit, just as a pipe or flute is of him who blows into it.
>
> (237)

Alliteration is a favorite poetic device of Gibbon, inherent in his Anglo-Saxon heritage. Page after page is peppered with alliterations. Among some of Gibbon's most colorful alliterative series are these: "memory of mindkind" (40), "stood in silent suspense" (89), "professions of patriotism" (93), "civil confusion" (93), "perpetually pressed" (175), "dreaded death" (221), "partial prejudice" (346), "sarcastic style" (380), "stood silent" (471), "strange though splendid" (700), and "days of distress" (703).

Gibbon's delight in metaphors gives his nonfiction a poetic quality, creating a wider scope of appeal. Perhaps his most famous metaphor is that of the weed. The weed, in Gibbon's composition, reflects that tough, obnoxious growth of taxes, a growth that eventually chokes not only the land and its rich green soil, but also the people whose lives are depleted.

> ...It is impossible to conjecture the motive that engaged him to spare so trifling a remnant of the public evil; but the noxious weed, which had not been totally eradicated, again sprang up with the most luxuriant growth, and in the succeeding age darkened the Roman world with its deadly shade. In the course of this history, we shall be too often summoned to explain the land-tax, the capitation, and the heavy contributions of corn, wine, oil, and meat, which were exacted from the provinces for the use of the court, the army, and the capital.
>
> (119)

Gibbon's fondness for irony cuts through his classic, creating a tension of contradiction. Indeed, even his definition of history has an ironic tone, for Gibbon sees history as "little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind" (72). With an ironic smile Gibbon describes the flight of Maximin when danger threatened his life: "The incredible speed which Maximin exerted in his flight is much more celebrated than his prowess in battle" (214). With an ironic voice Gibbon describes the primitive Christian church:

> The condemnation of the wisest and most virtuous of the Pagans, on account of their ignorance or disbelief of the divine truth, seems to offend the reason and the humanity of the present age. But the primitive church, whose faith was of a much firmer consistence, delivered over, without hesitation, to eternal torture the far greater part of the human species.
>
> (235)

Gibbon also exercises the artistic technique of contrast. He delights in linking contrasting traits. Most memorable is his contrast of the Moors to the warriors of Germany:

> ...The wandering Moors, as they gradually ventured to approach the sea-shore and the camp of the Vandals, must have viewed with terror and astonishment the dress, the armour, the martial pride and discipline of the unknown strangers who had landed on their coast; and the fair complexions of the blue-eyed warriors of Germany formed a very singular contrast with the swarthy or olive hue which is derived from the neighborhood of the torrid zone.
>
> (557)

Gibbon's use of contrast extends to short pithy justapositions of words: "dismissed with compassion and contempt" (277), "alternately lost and regained" (384), "freedom or servitude" (550), "neither command nor obey" (603), "feeding or destroying the human species" (672), and "either a throne or a grave" (691).

In addition to ten artistic techniques which enhanced Gibbon's composition form we might add four traits of his eighteenth-century style: (a) control of nounce, (b) control of verbs, (c) control of prepositional phrases, and (d) parallelism. Gibbon's control of nouns creates a sense of rhythm in his sentence structure. His nounce are oftentimes vigorous compilations which crescendo in his sentence. Notice the threefold control of nouns here: "the fiery spirit of enthusiasm was abated by the cares, the pleasures, and the endearments of domestic life" (362). Later he writes of Theodoric, king of the Visigoths, who "deserved the love of his subjects, the confidence of his allies, and the esteem of mankind" (572). When Gibbon describes the reign of the Merovingians over the Romans, he writes about the "ferocious barbarians, who contemptuously insulted their possessions, their freedom, and their safety" (631).

Likewise Gibbon controls his verbs. When Julian became emperor, Gibbon writes that Julian "despised the honours, renounced the pleasures, and discharged with incessant diligence the duties" (401). When a monastic monk became a fugitive, Gibbon artfully uses the verb to say that "a guilty fugitive was pursued, arrested, and restored to his perpertual prison" (614). In the fall of Constantinople Mohammed the Second had "ministers of justice" posted "behind the line, to urge, to restrain, and to punish" (694).

Gibbon's use of prepositional phrases reveals his control of language, an eighteenth-century stylistic feature. Again a rhythm of language emerges in his prepositional phrases. In describing the military scene near the Hellespont and the Thracian Bosphorus, Gibbon notes that "those narrow seas" were often covered "with soldiers, with arms, and with fortifications" (208). Boundaries of the Christian dioceses were "decided by the zeal and success of the first missionaries, by the wishes of the people, and by the propagation of the Gospel" (360). In describing Julian's failure to appoint a successor, Gibbon notes that Julian was diverted from a resolution "by the difficulty of the choice, the jealousy of power, the fear of ingratitude, and the natural presumption of health, of youth, and of prosperity" (426).

Gibbon's eighteenth-century style reflects a love of parallelism. Sentences and phrases must be symmetrical, balanced or parallel. Notice the stately parallelism in Gibbon's following phrases: "to punish the one or to relieve the other;" "by considerations of prudence rather than by principles of justice" (210);"wanted spirit to command or docility to obey" (536); "to his insidious policy as well as to the terror of his arms" (575); "whose smile was the hope of fortune, and whose frown was the messenger of death" (678); "the Propontis by nature, and the harbour by art" (684).

Adding Gibbon's artistic techniques to his eighteenth-century style, we see a craftsman at work. Yet his nonfiction historical classic remains of literary value also because his theme is powerful, sweeping, and profound. The decline of a great empire fascinates readers because inevitably this theme touches the deepest levels of human longings and fears. English students might turn to Gibbon for the drama of this theme alone. Gibbon gives a sweeping sense of his theme of decline and concomitant fall in his vigorous outline at the end of his history:

> After a diligent inquiry I can discern four principal causes of the ruin of Rome, which continued to operate in a period of more than a thousand years. I. The injuries of time and nature. II. The hostile attacks of the barbarians and Christians. III. The use and abuse of the materials. And, IV. The domestic quarrels of the Romans.
>
> (702)

Given a threefold procedure of introducing Gibbon to an English class, an English teacher might discover the value and purposefulness of a literary style combined with an important theme. Gibbon's non-fiction historical classic is not to be pigeonholed, insulated, or imprisoned in a category of history only. Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* transcends the history label and evolves as a lasting, continuously read, fascinating literary composition. His style begins to assume a life of its own and breathes with vigor, rhythm, balance, poetic insights, and flashes of genuis.

The great victory for the English teacher who uses Gibbon's nonfiction historical classic is this: language can be demonstrated as a literary art worthy of attention, admiration, and imitation.

Sources

Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Introduction by Frank C. Bourne (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1982), 735 pages. All references to Gibbon's text have been taken from this edition and incorporated into the body of the paper.

Fiction, Nonfiction: Some New Elements with a Dash of History

Norma Walrath

Many good biographies read like novels and should be taught in similar fashions. Analysis of character, discussion of theme and thematic events, imagery, juxtaposition of character and setting, plot development--i.e. the structure of narrative events--should all be part of a thorough teaching of both biographies and fictional works. What makes teaching nonfictional books like biographies and autobiographies so interesting are the new elements teachers and students alike must consider. Very simply, I consider perspective (or point-of-view) and historical context the variant elements from most fiction; these are the "elements of nonfiction that need most direct focus when the English teacher begins to teach the alternatives to novels. *Who* writes the biography or autobiography and *when* the narrative takes place are essential to understanding nonfiction as a separate, but equal, (equally exciting literature, I mean!), genre from fiction.

In teaching a biography or autobiography, the teacher must emphasize the historical presentation of the character or persona of the work. This means a concentrated focus on the subject of the book in his or her particular time frame and in a particular place. For example, Elie Wiesel's *Night* (or any of his other autobiographical books) and *The Diary of Anne Frank* are practically meaningless if they are not seen as historical documents of the Holocaust of World War II. Students should be encouraged to do research outside of class about the war and Hitler before, during, and after the reading of these books. I often show filmstrips (borrowed from the social studies department) and slides of some of the heinous events and of Adolph Hitler's life to prepare students for some of the scenes in the two aforementioned autobiographies. When students view the dark-coated Jews huddled in long lines in Polish ghettos or lined up stark naked before firing squads so that they are ready to fall into pits for their own burial, they very easily can relate to these pictoral "truths" to the verbal realities of Anne Frank and Elie Wiesel. Most poignantly, they can immediately attest to the horror of Wiesel's standing before one of these pits himself as a youth during one of the selection procedures of the Nazis. When kids view the scores of magazine clippings I have gathered for several years with their huge photographs of bare-headed fear-lined faces of Jews behind barbed wire compounds, they have very little trouble imagining what happened to Anne and her family after the Nazis invaded their hiding place in Amsterdam.

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The idea of history and whatever "reality" or "truth" it engenders in a student's consciousness is essential to the teaching of these two works of nonfiction. Students may not care for Anne's adolescent pettiness, but they are certainly "taught" a lesson in the value of writing and writing truthfully in the English class. They can learn the value of self-expression--oftentimes this is when I suggest that they begin diaries (rather, journals) for a certain part of the school year. Students also give oral reports on various aspects of the Holocaust, from biographical data on Hitler to reports on the various concentration camps in Europe. When these two books are taught in conjunction, I also stress the differences in their situation because of their locations. The locus of Anne's story is Amsterdam (where her secret home is now a tourist site) and Wiesel's begins in Sighet, Poland. Map study, by necessity, becomes part of the unit. In total, it is a wonderful blend of history and reading and oral reporting and journal writing, and quite a different approach to the imaginative works of fiction I usually teach. (In fact, teaching these two books with this heavy historical framework provides a double incentive: first, to vary the routine from fiction to something "real" and "true" and then to escape to fiction from such reality).

While historical context is the most important aspect of teaching nonfiction, point-of-view is also crucial in most books of this nature. That Frank and Wiesel are Holocaust victims maintains the credibility of their writings. In a book such as Never Cry Wolf the author's perspective is essential to the understanding of the book's purpose. The author, Farley Mowatt, deliberately "misinterprets" certain Canadian federal regulations to expose human folly. The book is not about the disappearance of the Canadian caribou through the predations of the Canadian wold as Mowett's superiors maintain. Rather it is a personal, first-hand expose of the false accusations about the feeding habits of the wolf. In the book, Mowett the naturalist proves that rodents, not caribou, are the mainstay of the wolf's diet in the Canadian hunting grounds. He also shows that it is man, not the wold, who has decimated the caribou herds; i.e. the almighty hunter has taken his sport hunting far too seriously. Mowatt shows that the wolf should not be the scapegoat for sparse deer population. His point-of-view as a minor government official who has to document the wolf's rapine activities is essential to the understanding and appreciation of the book. A victim himself of governmental red tape and miscalculation, Mowatt very clearly, yet humorously, describes the "real" situation and nature of the Canadian wolf. His not-so-objective, but very creditable and credible account of the human ravaging of caribou, makes this nonfiction a meaningful book for the English classroom. With humor he describes himself as a guinea pig naturalist alone in the semi-Arctic wilderness in Canada; he is without ample supplies, food, human contact, scientific equipment or means of communication. (The radio the government gives him does not work, he has no stock of "essentials" like toilet paper, etc.) His humor, fine sense of perception, and good nature make this a worthy book for the classroom. Mowatt's exposé of federal folly rings true to most of us who are often "victims" of bureaucratic bungling.

Teaching Never Cry Wolf with emphasis on Mowatt's perspective should be especially applicable and relevant since the advent of the popular movie. Mowatt's humorous proclivities and sensible adaptations to his environment are pointed in the movie version. When students who have viewed the film read the book, they can readily point out similarities and differences, and the English teacher can initiate a discussion of the value of film and of literature as art form. This book, too, can be taught with a historical perspective; students can ferret out governmental regulations that simply do not warrant full acceptance by the populace. They can also use letter writing skills to write to the Environmental Protection Agency (and other similar naturalist organizations like the Sierra Club) to obtain information about relevant naturalist issues in their areas. (I live near Bluff Point in Groton, CT, and would love to have students find out about the fishing and shell fishing regulations for this endangered natural preserve along the Atlantic seaboard.) In any case, the perspective used in writing a book of nonfiction is important to its purpose and its slant. Students need to know this to understand their own slant in their own writings. They need to know they can be writers of nonfiction, that their writings are important because of who they are and when they write. Their writings are historical documents in themselves. The difference from studying fiction should prove quite valuable to the apt student and the probing instructor.

It should be clear, however, that I do not wish to set up one genre of literature against the other. Fiction and nonfiction are compatible in the classroom. I once took a humanities course (at Wesleyan University) entitled Fiction and History: Which Is True? The class read several novels and reported on the historical accuracies of the fictional representations of the character(s) in the novels. Classroom discussion was mainly a philosophical argument about the accuracy and "truth" of history. We read various historical accounts of the notorious politican Huey Long from Louisiana after we read Robert Penn Warren's All the King's Men. While most of the historians viewed Long as a scoundrel, there were conflicting reports about his value as a politician. Our arguments in class focused on how much historical nonfiction writing was actually history. It actually boiled down to who was doing the writing and his bias. Louisiana historians who benefited from Long's legislation thought him godlike; others knew him to be a demon. The same principle applied to the other historical characters we studied when we read fiction: Nat Turner in William Styron's The Confessions of Nat Turner, the Rosenbergs in E.L. Doctorow's The Book of Daniel, and others. My point is that reports were given on historical accuracy and fictional misrepresentation, and the class found both these terms to be misnomers. Fictional presentations often seemed more "real" and "true" than did some historical accounts filled with facts, dates, testimonies, etc. The point-of-view of the writer was crucial to the understanding of the writings. It also emphasized how closely related fiction and nonfiction are. They are genres that offer great potential in the academic classroom and are mutually complimentary. In fact, these genres are best approached together rather than in customary isolation.

Opinion is a flitting thing
But Truth outlasts the Sun
If then we cannot own them both
Possess the oldest one.

Dickinson, Complete Poems..., #1455

Clue Me In: Mystery Stories with Exotic Backgrounds

Diane P. Shugert

Serious students of literature know already that we mystery readers are a breed surpassing strange. Half-crazed and half-cracked, we ignore character development (Mysteries must hide character, not develop it). We skip the graceful language (Metaphor gets in the way of a good mystery). We sacrifice everything valuable, so outsiders think, to plot--to the mystery's solution. We worship at the altar of the false, the misleading, the unliterary.

Bad though we are, we are many. Franklin D. Roosevelt was one of us, and the mystery section of my local library is heavily patronized. (I know because the new mysteries are always checked out to somebody else.) We reread our favorite authors, too--sometimes, I'll admit, because we've forgotten that we've read them, but often because we want to savor again their excellences. Many adolescents read mysteries, as well. Don Gallo, my CCSU colleague and a former editor of CEJ, recently surveyed young adult reading habits and found that mysteries composed one of the favorite categories for YA reading.

Several characteristics of mystery readers provide opportunities for educational use of our degenerate habit. I want to suggest a few ways in which our sows' ears might be made into--if not silk purses--at least non-nitrite and non-nitrite head cheese. I have already mentioned that we will reread our favorites. Think how often we English teachers try to get our students to read again in order to examine a work more closely, in order to see what was not obvious on first reading. Since the mystery reader is prepared to read again, mysteries can profitably be studied for their secondary attributes. One of these attributes is the character of the mystery's principal investigator. A mystery author's sleuth often appears in many books, so the reader finds many situations which can reveal the detective's nature. Particularly interesting are the ways in which the detective's character does not change. Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot, Miss Marple, Tommy and Tuppence Beresford (now adapted for PBS's Mystery series), or Mr. Satterthwaite are the same wherever they appear. They rarely even age. Dorothy Sayers's Peter Wimsey does develop, however. He ages and changes to some extent. Though lack of change may be "unliterary," consistency is necessary for a successful continuing mystery series. Perhaps the detective's sameness may even be seen as a result of his or her experience. Sleuths spend all their time doing puzzles, an activity which doesn't develop interpersonal skills.

Diane Shugert's addiction to mysteries is longstanding. Forty-five years of her teachers' and colleagues' efforts to rehabilitate her have failed so thoroughly that Ms. Shugert now indulges her addiction publicly.

A second characteristic of mystery readers is their attention to detail. In order to figure out the clues, to beat the author to the solution, the reader attends carefully *especially* to whatever at first seems irrelevant. In a great work of literature the seemingly irrelevant usually has significance. In a mystery the irrelevant may remain so--merely a red herring. But the teacher may capture the mystery reader's attention to detail, nevertheless. In the very best mysteries, after all, everything is relevant--as the detective's explanation (or literary interpretation) shows in the end. Mystery relevance can be compared and contrasted with literary relevance, in any case.

The mystery reader is also characterized by love of plot. Since plot dominates most mysteries, its study is both easy for the student and important to the genre. Mystery writers play with chronology, too, in order to maintain the mystery, so why a chapter ends at one point and the next chapter begins at another is significant. Helping mystery readers to understand how mystery plots are constructed teaches readers to go beyond the obvious. Such teaching also gives the reader even more clues to the solution.

Mystery readers tend not to be sensitive to point of view, yet many mysteries depend for their success on the narrator's limited knowledge of events. Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* is a *tour de force* in use of point of view. The narrator is the murderer--and yet the reader is fooled. We accept the limitations of a single point of view in literature; why not accept and study them in mysteries as well?

Even though the literary study of mysteries has much to contribute to English class, one nonliterary, nonfictional characteristic of mysteries and their readers is, I think, even more promising. To the books and to their readers, the *background*--the setting--is often as important as the mystery itself. The background can validate the reader's experience, or it can introduce the reader to other ways of living and other locales. In mysteries the setting rarely influences character. It is usually merely a place in which the story happens, but "background" mysteries may still provide useful information about the setting itself, even though whether the victim is pushed from a cliff or from a skyscraper matters little. Here are a few mysteries which are of special interest because of their backgrounds:

AFRICAN: Elspeth Huxley's reminiscence of her African childhood, *The Flame Trees of Thika*, was shown on public television recently. She has also written two mysteries, *Murder on Safari* and *The African Poison Murders*. Both evoke the natural and social world of Africa.

AUSTRALIAN: Arthur Upfield's detective, Napoleon Bonaparte, solves bizarre mysteries, each one in a different--and spectacular--Australian location. The solutions frequently turn on Bonaparte's special knowledge of both the white (through his father) and the aboriginal (through his mother) society. Despite Upfield's preoccupation with Bonaparte's heritage, the books are full of accurate information concering aboriginal customs and Australian geography and history.

CHINESE: Stories of crime and detection have been part of Chinese popular culture since 221 B.C. Robert van Gulik, a Dutch diplomat and oriental scholar, wrote a series of novels based upon Chinese detective stories which van Gulik adapted to Western conventions. The detective is Judge Dee, who was a celebrated seventh century imperial magistrate. Family, women, everyday Chinese ways of living, and Chinese government from 1500-1700 form the principal focus of all the books. According to Donald F. Lach, who wrote the introductions to the University of Chicago Press's paperback editions of the mysteries, "Van Gulik acquired qualifications for understanding traditional China that are no longer part of the equipment of specialists...The insights and elucidations offered by Van Gulik provide the Westerner with a painless and pleasant introduction to premodern China and with an understanding of how different, yet sometimes how similar, are the peoples and societies of China and the West." This series is extensive, and each book highlights several distinct aspects of Chinese society--from Judge Dee's eating rice, pickles, and tea for breakfast to the female characters' being beaten, abandoned, or sold.

ENGLISH: "The English Country House Mystery" is a subgenre of mystery books. Dorothy Sayres, Agatha Christie, Margery Allingham, and P.D. James are well known practitioners. My own interest in England and English life was first piqued by mystery books, and though much that I learned from them was misleading, much was also true. A reader who expects contemporary English life to be as Christie depicts it is in no worse shape than one who thinks Trollope's, Hardy's, Austen's, Bronte's, or Dickens's depictions to be accurate.

JAPANESE: James Melville's detective is a modern Japanese policeman. His adventures reveal something of the social hierarchies of Japan in addition to the detective's family customs. Japan is currently much in the news, and knowing the structure and function of Japanese gangs may add depth to superficial newspaper analyses of Japanese businesses. The detective has a loving, and forceful, wife; a daughter and son-in-law who are reformed radicals; and a grandson in whose honor the family may fly a special flag on Japanese Boy's Day.

LOCAL: Nearly every state has at least one mystery author who sets his or her books in that state. Hilary Waugh's books are set in Fairfield, Connecticut, and Tom Tryon's in Wethersfield, for example. Charles Merrill Smith writes about Chicago. His detective, C.P. Randollph, is a former professional football player who has become the pastor of the very wealthy Church of the Good Shepherd, Reverend Randolph's parsonage is the penthouse of an office building built on church land. (I enjoy these mysteries also because each one deals with some religious point--theft of a Gutenberg Bible; an electronic evangelist; church investments.) The stories move throughout Chicago society. Your librarian will know of mysteries in your state. Students are often delighted to discover their own places named in books.

Whether you decide to use a mystery for class study or merely to recommend a few mysteries to those of your students who are addicts, I hope you will accept a few words of caution. 1. Celebrate the mysteries for what they are. They do not interfere with students' learning to appreciate the literary canon. Indeed, I hope this article has shown some ways in which mysteries can enhance the reading of more traditional works. 2. Check the mysteries for their suitability for your students. None that I have mentioned is sexually explicit, for example, but sex is certainly mentioned in many. Racism and sexism sometimes crop up, too. Violence is not a problem, for the murders are rarely presented in graphic detail. We mystery addicts may have low taste, but our taste is for armchairs and books rather than for action. My own experience with a lifetime of murder and crime has stirred me only to love England; to wish for the money to visit the Australian outback and watch a willi-willi dance across the desert; to experience the special smell of the African veldt; and to yearn for authentic Tokyo sushi.

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He would use the simplest, plainest language, he said to himself over and over again; but it is not always easy to use simple, plain language,--by no means so easy as to mount on stilts, and to march along with sesquipedalian words, with pathos, spasms, and notes of interjection.

Anthony Trollope

We are perhaps accustomed in judging for ourselves and of others to draw the lines too sharply, and to say that on this side lie vice, folly, heartlessness, and greed,--and on the other honour, love, truth, and wisdom,--the good and the bad each in its own domain. But the good and the bad mix themselves so thoroughly in our thoughts, even in our aspirations, that we must look for excellence rather in overcoming evil than in freeing ourselves from its influence.

Anthony Trollope, *He Knew He Was Right*